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Open your textbooks, please
AU Press launches a series of open-access textbooks 18

RHONDA HAMILTON
MN, 2011
CONNECTING COMMUNITIES IN NEED 25
Athabasca University (AU) is Canada’s Open University, a leading online university focused on the future of learning. Based in Athabasca, Alta., we’re proud to serve more than 40,000 students in 90 countries with courses and programs in the arts, business, health disciplines, social sciences, sciences and technology.

As an open university, we strive to help people everywhere overcome the challenges that can prevent them from attending traditional university — challenges like family and job responsibilities and not being able to relocate to go to school. Our open admission policy allows anyone 16 or older to study with us as an undergraduate student regardless of their educational history.

Keep up with the latest AU news all year round
Visit the AU home page: athabascau.ca
Like us on Facebook: facebook.com/Athabasca.University
Follow us on Twitter: @AthabascaU
President’s Message
An exciting tomorrow.

Notable News
Highlights of the past year and what’s to come.

Student Stories
How different AU master’s degrees have all helped students strengthen their sense of community.

Student & Alumni Notes
Highlights of the year that was for AU students and alumni.

CONTINUED SUCCESS
AU’s partnership with the WHL is thriving.

CLIMB TO THE CAMPAIGN SUMMIT
The Open Our World campaign builds momentum.

LEARNING INSIDE A SYSTEM THAT’S LEARNING YOU
Dr. Kinshuk and Dr. Sabine Graf leverage donations to develop tools that enrich learning by adapting to each learner.

How do you pay for a dream?
AU alumni pay tribute to their future colleagues.

The Architect of his own future
Profile: Craig Rogers is the first recipient of the new Hutchinson scholarship.

Open Your Textbooks, Please
AU Press launches a series of open-access course texts.

Turning people onto science is only natural
Profile: Albert and Pirkko Karvonen donate $250,000 to Science Outreach - Athabasca.

Investing in AU means investing in community
Profile: Campaign chair Heather Kennedy makes a donation to community service.

“I believe in empowering and building communities. This degree will enable us to continue our work in Haiti.”

See page 25 for the full story on Rhonda Hamilton.
Speaking of research, 2013 will see the appointment of two new Campus Alberta Innovates Program (CAIP) chairs, one in Hydroecology and Environmental Health and the other in Computational Sustainability and Environmental Analytics. These new chairs will significantly boost the university’s research capacity and will further solidify AU’s reputation as a research-intensive university.

AU also has an enviable group of scholars pushing us forward. We were amongst the first in the world to explore massive open online courses (MOOCs), we led Canada’s initiatives on a more meaningful copyright regime, and we are one of just two universities in the world to have a UNESCO Chair in Open Educational Resources. We will continue to lead innovation in open and e-learning.

As you know, the past year has not been without challenges, but I’m confident we’ve made the difficult decisions and are well-placed to meet the future.

Our goal is to continue to position Athabasca as a global leader in online education, and we’re putting the pieces, and people, in place to make this happen.

I invite you to spend some time with this magazine and learn more about our mission and our people. I’m sure you will agree that Athabasca University is helping to change the lives of our students who are building the foundations for an exciting tomorrow.

Frits Pannekoek, PhD
President, Athabasca University
2012

MARCH

AU is one of nine Alberta employers to receive a 2011 Premier’s Award for Healthy Workplaces. The university is presented with an Award of Merit in the Large Workplace category at the Alberta Legislature Building on March 13.

APRIL

Respected biologist and community leader Dr. Trilochan S. Bakshi, AU’s first full-time faculty member and dean of science, passes away at the age of 86.

AU Calgary hosts the sixth biannual colloquium of the Campus Alberta Writing Studies group, organized by AU Write Site coordinator Linda McCloud-Bondoc.

MAY

Dr. Dietmar Kennepohl, with AU’s Centre for Science, receives the Chemical Institute of Canada’s Award for Chemical Education for his “outstanding contribution in Canada to education at the post-secondary level in the field of chemistry.”

A second Athabasca University Geophysical Observatory, AUGO II, opens 25 kilometres southwest of Athabasca to observe northern lights and other space phenomena in a darker night sky.

Dr. George Siemens, an AU assistant professor and a well-known expert in massive open online courses (MOOCs), receives an honorary doctorate from Universidad de San Martin de Porres.

AU launches the public phase of Open Our World, the university’s first major fundraising campaign, and holds celebrations in Athabasca, Edmonton and Calgary. For more coverage of the campaign, see page 8.

JUNE

Dr. Bruce Morito, with AU’s Centre for Humanities, gives the first ever keynote address for the Canadian Society for the Study of Practical Ethics congress. His address is called “Ethics and Economics: An Internal Relation.”

The class of 2012 comes from all over the world to attend convocation in Athabasca. For more on convocation, see page 26.

AU’s Open Knowledge Environment IT project wins a 2012 Innovator’s Award in Leadership, Governance, & Policy from Campus Technology magazine.

Dr. Mike Gismondi, with AU’s Centre for Social Sciences, and several research partners are awarded a $200,000 SSHRC Partnership Development Grant to work with the B.C.-Alberta Social Economy Research Alliance (BALTA) on a project called Social Economy, Community Resilience and the Transition to Sustainability.
**JULY**

**Dr. Jay Smith**, with AU's Centre for Social Sciences, spends July in New York City participating in the 2012 Cross-Currents Research Colloquium and researching the role of religion in the Occupy movement.

**SEPTEMBER**

**AU receives UNESCO funding** to create an online course in media and information literacy that will teach citizens communication skills for promoting peace. The project is led by **Dr. Rory McGreal**, director of AU's Technology Enhanced Knowledge Research Institute and chair holder for the AU UNESCO/COL Chair in Open Educational Resources.

**AUGUST**

The **Alberta Moving Beyond Breast Cancer (AMBER) study** puts out a call for research participants. The study is funded by a $2.5 million grant from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and is the largest long-term study of its kind in the world. A member of the research team is **Dr. Jeff Vallance** from AU's Centre for Nursing and Health Studies.

**OCTOBER**

**Hiromi Goto**, an award-winning author of fiction, non-fiction, poetry and short stories, becomes AU’s third writer in residence.

**AU makes a donation of 25 refurbished laptops** to a girls’ school in a small rural town in India. This is the second laptop donation AU has made to a remote Asian school.

**To celebrate its centennial, the Calgary Stampede honours 100 Albertans with Western Legacy Awards.** One of the recipients is **AU president Dr. Frits Pannekoek**, who is recognized for his work as a historian and an educator.

**Dr. Pamela Hawranik**, dean of AU graduate studies, receives the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal for her work in advancing hospice palliative care.
AU launches the e-Lab, an online laboratory with an ever-growing array of free learning resources.

**NEWLY PUBLISHED RESEARCH** by AU tutor and course author Dr. Jim Brophy and course author Margaret Keith reveals that women who work in certain industries are far more likely to develop breast cancer.

**2013**

**JANUARY**

AU is named a finalist for the 2013 Aboriginal Affairs – Best Practice Award, one of the Alberta Business Awards of Distinction sponsored by the Alberta Chambers of Commerce.

A study exploring how aquasize can help people living with chronic diseases enters its second phase. A principal investigator of the study is Dr. Steven Johnson with AU’s Centre for Nursing and Health Studies.

**FEBRUARY**

The Faculty of Science and Technology introduces the new Post-Baccalaureate Certificate in Information Technology Management. The certificate is for IT professionals interested in broadening their management skills.

**MARCH**

Several professors from the Faculty of Science and Technology visit amiskwaci Academy to teach hands-on workshops for the Aboriginal school’s first ever Science and Technology Day.

**APRIL**

The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences hosts Identity, Agency, and the Digital Nexus, an international symposium held in Edmonton.

**AU Calgary moves to its new offices** at the Bow Valley College South Campus.

The second annual conference of the Athabasca River Basin Research Institute, ARBRI Day, takes place on April 26 in Edmonton.

**MAY**

The AU-organized EdInnovation 2013, the first educational technology conference of its kind in Canada, is held in Calgary.

**SEPTEMBER**

AU and Bow Valley College begin offering two AU Bachelor of Professional Arts (BPA) degrees on-site at the college: the BPA in Criminal Justice and the BPA in Human Services.

The AU Bachelor of Management offered on-site at Lethbridge College is relaunched.
Since the WHL/AU partnership began, the number of WHL players studying at AU has almost doubled.

By Athabasca University Office of Advancement

A PARTNERSHIP THAT HELPS SOME OF North America’s best young hockey players pursue university education continues to thrive. Since 2009, when Athabasca University partnered with the Western Hockey League to offer AU courses to the league’s players, more than 200 WHL players have registered in more than 350 AU courses. And the number of current students has almost doubled, from 60 in the partnership’s first year to 114 during the 2011-12 WHL season.

“Athabasca University has opened up a whole new dimension of academic opportunities for our players,” says Jim Donlevy, the WHL’s director of education services.

The league is committed to providing its players with an opportunity to develop their skills on the ice without compromising their education. For example, the league offers each player a full one-year post-secondary education scholarship for each year he spends in the WHL.

“Athabasca University has opened up a whole new dimension of academic opportunities for our players,” says Jim Donlevy, the WHL’s director of education services.

While many players put university on hold until after they leave the league, the partnership with AU enables them to start studying right away. And the option to enrol at AU is still available for those who have moved on from the WHL.

This means the WHL players who study at AU are in a variety of situations when it comes to their hockey career. Many are current WHL players, but there are also WHL alumni who are either no longer playing hockey or have moved onto a pro league.

Some are on the cusp of going pro. Seth Jones, who’s predicted to be one of the top 2013 NHL draft picks, is taking a course on entrepreneurship from AU.

“Our courses work well for these students no matter what their situation is,” says Michael Shouldice, senior student recruitment officer at AU and the university liaison for the partnership.

Players can fit in AU’s online courses alongside their demanding hockey schedules, keeping up with assignments even as they travel for games. And if they’re traded mid-season, Donlevy notes, it’s not a problem. “The beauty of Athabasca University is they just pick up their books and go to the new place and nothing is interrupted,” he says.

Psychology courses have attracted the highest number of students, followed by...
entrepreneurship, finance, economics, English and math.

Both Donlevy and Shouldice say a key part of the partnership’s success is the WHL’s education advisors, who work for each team and liaise with the players on their schooling. “The education advisors care so much about the players,” Shouldice says.

Roger Castle has been the education advisor for the Edmonton Oil Kings for six years and previously taught at the University of Alberta. “I understand the importance and value of further education, and I’m passing that on to the players,” says Castle.

His efforts are clearly working, as the Oil Kings received the WHL Scholastic Team of the Year award for the 2011-12 season.

With 10 of the Oil Kings taking AU courses in the 2012-13 season, the university has played a big part in helping them continue their education successfully, Castle says. “Athabasca University makes the registration process simple, and there’s always assistance accessible,” he says. “Having online courses available is so important to the players.”

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**In their own words**

WHL players and alumni share why they study at AU.

---

**ADAM LOWRY**

*Left Wing, Swift Current Broncos (WHL)*

2009-10 WHL Scholastic Player of the Year

“AU is a great place to study because of the many courses it has to choose from as well as the great support that tutors provide. (Courses are also) different than other online courses I have taken. I think they provide more instruction and support.... (AU) has allowed me to pursue my interest in business. Since I am able to further my knowledge in this field, it has given me an idea of what I plan to do when my playing career is over.”

---

**ADAM HUGHESMAN**

*Left Wing, Las Vegas Wranglers (East Coast Hockey League)*

WHL Alumnus

“In my down time away from the rink, I like to study. It helps me take my mind off hockey. I feel I get the best of both worlds, as I get to continue my dream of playing professional hockey while getting my education.... Playing hockey gives me great (career) skills. Match that with an education, and I feel I am a step ahead.”

---

**SAM FIORETTI**

*Centre, Moose Jaw Warriors (WHL)*

“I’m studying with AU to get a head start on my academic future. It gives me classes I will need to complete my degree.”

---

**KEEGAN LOWE**

*Defenceman, Edmonton Oil Kings (WHL)*

“AU is very flexible in helping WHL student athletes like myself complete university courses while playing in the league. I take advantage of long days on the bus to complete my course. The online (material) is easily accessible with a very helpful support system.”
Climb to the campaign summit continues at a quick pace

Open Our World is building momentum and relationships that will sustain AU for the long term.

By Cathy Nickel

BY ALL ACCOUNTS, 2013 HAS THE potential to be a watershed year for Athabasca University’s Open Our World fundraising campaign. The campaign, AU’s first major foray into the campaign realm, is being well-received, more alumni are “paying it forward” by giving to the university (see page 15), the donation tally is rising steadily (see below left), and the number of relationships built or strengthened bodes well for future support.

“We have great momentum,” says Heather Kennedy, campaign chair and member of the AU Board of Governors. “There are so many good things on the go and so many opportunities in the pipe — and they’ll start to reveal themselves in the next few months.”

Among the many reasons underscoring her optimism, she notes that “in corporate Canada, particularly in the West, corporate social responsibility and being part of the communities in which these companies work is a major focus — and AU’s priorities dovetail with what they want to do.”

Her experiences meeting with colleagues in her own industry (Kennedy is vice-president, government relations, for Suncor Energy) confirm the point. “Many of them are excited when they hear testimonials from students, learn how many of their employees are enrolled at AU or discover how AU’s programs can work with their stakeholders. It’s easy for them to see the value in AU and in considering supporting AU.”

“People are sometimes surprised and always enthusiastic (when they) learn more about the university,” adds Dr. Pamela Walsh, AU’s vice-president of advancement. “The campaign has led to a greater awareness of AU and its mission, which in turn has led to greater investment in AU and its students.”

It’s also “a great launching pad for creating and continuing relationships,” Walsh says. “We’re building relationships with individuals, alumni and industry while exploring the alignment between their interests and our institutional priorities. It’s a bit of an art and a science, but at the end of the day AU and each of its donors should benefit from the partnership.”

To learn more about Open Our World or to get in touch with AU’s Development and External Relations team, visit Open Our World online: open.athabascau.ca
Nine easy ways for alumni to Open Our World

If you’re one of our alumni, there are lots of ways you can support Athabasca University even if you’re short on time or money.

1. **ATTEND** a student and alumni event. We organize several of these events each year, and if there’s one in your area, we’ll let you know — providing we have your current contact information. If we don’t...

2. **UPDATE** us with your new contact information by emailing: aualumni@athabascau.ca

3. **SHARE** your AU experience with any AU students you bump into along with potential students. Remember, anyone you meet could be a potential student! With that in mind...

4. **ENCOURAGE** your friends, colleagues and family members to try out AU by taking just a single course. One of the nice things about AU is you don’t have to commit to a whole program right away — you can start by taking one course to find out if you’re comfortable with distance learning.

5. **PARTICIPATE** in our annual giving program. It’s as simple as making one gift to AU once a year, and you can give online: open.athabascau.ca/give

6. **VOLUNTEER** to be a resource for students and alumni with career questions by emailing: aualumni@athabascau.ca

7. **TELL** others why philanthropy to AU is important — for example, gifts for AU student awards help to keep tuition affordable for students with financial challenges.

8. **DISPLAY** your degree parchment prominently, and mention your AU credentials on your résumé, in your work life and of course on LinkedIn. And while you’re there...

9. **JOIN** the Athabasca University Alumni LinkedIn group

**PHOTO**
The AU community celebrated the public launch of Open Our World in 2012 at launch events in Athabasca, Edmonton and Calgary.
Meet the campaign cabinet

Several outstanding supporters of AU have stepped forward to lead the *Open Our World* campaign.

**LEADERSHIP**

1. **James E.C. Carter, Honorary Chair** (Spruce Grove)
   Past President & COO, Syncrude // Chair, Edmonton Symphony Orchestra // Chair, Alberta Carbon Capture and Storage Development Council // Director for ATB Financial, Clark Builders, EPCOR & Finning International

2. **Heather E. Kennedy, Chair** (Calgary)
   Vice-President, Government Relations, Suncor Energy // Current Member of the Athabasca University Board of Governors

**MEMBERS**

3. **Melissa L. Blake** (Fort McMurray)
   Mayor, Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo // Alumna of Athabasca University (BAdmin, 1994) // 2008 Recipient of the Athabasca University Distinguished Alumni Award

4. **David J. Burnett** (Edmonton)
   Past President & CEO, NorTerra Inc. // Past Member & Chair of the Athabasca University Board of Governors // 2008 Inductee to the Order of Athabasca University

5. **Barry Johns** (Edmonton)
   Principal, Barry Johns (Architecture) Limited // Chancellor, College of Fellows, Royal Architectural Institute of Canada

6. **Timothy T. Nerenz** (Germantown, Wisconsin, U.S.A.)
   Academic Coach/Subject Matter Expert, Faculty of Business, Athabasca University // Alumnus of Athabasca University (MBA, 1999) // Past Member of the Athabasca University Board of Governors // 2011 Inductee to the Order of Athabasca University

7. **Diego Romero** (Calgary)
   Project Director, Teck Resources Limited

8. **Joy P. Romero** (Calgary)
   Vice-President, Technology Development, Canadian Natural Resources Limited // Alumna of Athabasca University (MBA, 2006) // Past Member & Chair of the Athabasca University Board of Governors // 2010 Inductee to the Order of Athabasca University

9. **Michael Shouldice** (Edmonton)
   Senior Recruitment Officer, Athabasca University // Student of Athabasca University (Master of Arts – Integrated Studies)

10. **Curtis W. Stange** (Calgary)
    Chief Strategy & Operations Officer, ATB Financial // Alumnus of Athabasca University (MBA, 2009)

11. **David Tuccaro** (Fort McMurray)
    Founder, President & CEO, Tuccaro Inc. Group of Companies
### New donors in 2012-13

Thank you to all the new donors who made contributions to Athabasca University in 2012-13.

For a full list of supporters since the campaign began, visit Open Our World Donors & Supporters: [open.athabascau.ca/about/donor.php](http://open.athabascau.ca/about/donor.php)

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- BearPaw Media Productions
- Canadian Western Bank Group
- Raymond James Canada Foundation
- Ristech Information Solutions Ltd.
- Rupertsland Institute
- Sherrill Davis Fund for Arts and Education
- Social Functions Committee, College of Nursing, U of S
- ZoomerMedia Ltd.

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- Rupertsland Institute
- Sherrill Davis Fund for Arts and Education
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- Listen
- Read or
- Watch
  the lesson?
Learning inside a system that’s learning you

Dr. Kinshuk and Dr. Sabine Graf leverage donations to develop tools that enrich learning by adapting to each learner.

BY OMAR MOUALLEM

IF YOU THINK WE’RE YEARS FROM living with artificial intelligence (AI), consider for a moment your Facebook news feed. It’s far more complex than a list of recent actions made by your friends and favourite businesses. Rather, the content before you is stacked like bricks according to a blueprint you unwittingly gave Facebook and continue to redraft every time you visit a friend’s profile, comment on a post or “like” a picture or video.

The algorithm stacking those bricks is AI at work. And in the future, Athabasca University’s 40,000 students may be guided by AI almost as much as they’re guided by their instructors — completing their coursework inside an “intelligent” learning management system. But fear not the Big Brother implications. The algorithm in this system only wants to get to know you so it can remodel the course content on the fly and better suit your individual learning style and cognitive abilities.

“We’ve been working for quite some time in improving the learning experiences of our students,” says Dr. Kinshuk, a professor and associate dean in Athabasca University’s Faculty of Science and Technology. He’s also one of eight researchers from AU’s Technology Enhanced Knowledge Research Institute (TEKRI). TEKRI, one of the initiatives featured in AU’s Open Our World campaign (see page 8), is conducting leading-edge research on all aspects of online education, including adaptivity and personalization, the area in which Kinshuk focuses.

“If we know what tendencies the students have, we can actually start customizing our learning content for them and create automatic rules, like for this student I do this and for that student I do this,” explains Kinshuk.

Unlike Kinshuk — who has one name, like Cher — the research program he chairs under TEKRI’s umbrella is a mouthful: the NSERC/iCORE/Xerox/Markin Industrial Research Chair in Adaptivity and Personalization in Informatics. Its many corporate partners, the several donations it’s received and its 40 researchers and associates from...
universities as far as Tunisia and Taiwan are proof of the attention that this groundbreaking five-year, $2.8-million chair program is receiving.

Dr. Sabine Graf, an associate professor at AU and one of several AU researchers associated with the chair, is leading a team of graduate and post-doctoral researchers in programming a new adaptive algorithm. She hopes it will change online education forever by improving students’ academic performance, reducing their study times and increasing their satisfaction with their education.

Graf, who came to AU in 2009, explains the two prongs of an adaptive, personalized learning system.

“One thing is to identify students’ characteristics such as their learning style and cognitive abilities,” she says. For example, if a student often posts in the learning management system and attends most discussions, it’s a pretty good indicator that he or she is an “active learner,” one of four dimensions in the Felder-Silverman learning style model on which Graf’s research is based. “And then,” Graf continues, “the second thing is to use that information to provide students with adaptive courses and personal recommendations.”

The algorithm was completed in March, and this fall the research team hopes to begin pilots not just with AU students but also a sample of public schools in Alberta. “Being a public institution, we don’t think that it will serve only Athabasca University,” says Kinshuk, who’s contributed to 370 articles on online education over the past two decades. “Nowadays, there is no school, whether it’s brick and mortar or online, that doesn’t use some sort of learning management system.”

The chair program is also making strides in developing smartphone apps that connect online learning to the real world around us. One example Kinshuk uses is an app that geolocates relevant museum pieces nearby a fine arts student.

“When we were studying in school, we learned because it will be useful one day,” says Kinshuk. “But if we could relate learning to people’s lifestyle, their work — if we can show the relevance to the environments of our students — it will be more meaningful.”

To that end, AU’s Dr. Qing Tan developed the Mobile Virtual Campus, an app that crowdsources real-world examples of educational content from students, which they can then share with their classmates and professors with a couple of taps on their iPhone.

Kinshuk and Graf agree that developing smartphone apps, algorithms and other software that enhance online learning is only half the challenge. Like their students, teachers also have different styles, and convincing each teacher to cater to the various learning styles of students won’t be easy. That’s why Kinshuk and Graf have used $100,000 from an anonymous donor to develop a tool that will make this catering task easier.

“The tool analyzes course content and identifies how well it supports the various learning styles and cognitive abilities of students,” says Graf. “The tool then provides recommendations to teachers on how to extend course content so it better supports all kinds of students.”

Though intelligent algorithms are poised to play a major role in the future of learning, and this future holds many exciting possibilities, Kinshuk says one thing is for sure — you can’t cut teachers out of the formula.

Long before he became a professor and supervised doctoral students like Graf (an Austrian who completed her doctorate at the Vienna University of Technology with Kinshuk as her international supervisor), there was a push for something called “intelligent tutoring systems.”

“Earlier intelligent tutoring systems tried to replace the teacher by providing guidance that a teacher might otherwise give,” he explains. “That was part of my PhD, and by the time I was done, I realized that’s not the way to go.... You can’t replace the teacher.”
How do you pay for a dream?

AU alumni pay by supporting their future colleagues and supporting AU.

BY CATHY NICKEL

AS A 10-YEAR-OLD GROWING UP IN Vietnam, Nghiem Dang set his sights on working in health care so he could help his country’s sick and poor. His family moved to Canada in 1979, and now he’s looking forward to the day when he retires, moves to Asia and brings his dream to life — something he wouldn’t have envisioned if he hadn’t attended Athabasca University.

“Because of my work and home commitments, I could never have gone back to school without distance education,” explains Dang, who graduated with his Master of Nursing (Advanced Nurse Practitioner) degree in 2012 and currently works as a nurse at the Kingston Penitentiary in Ontario.

While the story is uniquely his, the sentiment is not. Most AU alumni can readily find the words to finish a sentence that starts with “AU made it possible for me to...” And because they appreciate the impact of the university on their lives, they’ve been inspired to donate to AU.

Dang says he can’t thank AU enough for the “wonderful opportunity” to continue his education. He wants others to have the same opportunity, so he donates monthly to student awards through the Faculty of Health Disciplines Caring for the Future campaign (part of the university-wide Open Our World campaign).

Christina Schmolke also donates monthly and sees it as a “micro-financing” investment in her future peers. She graduated from the Master of Counselling (Counselling Psychology) program in 2009, a milestone on her journey to becoming a registered psychologist.

Appreciating the financial struggles of students, especially mature students and those with families, Schmolke sees her donation as a way to ease their financial stress and make it possible for them to follow their career trajectory.

“Social justice is a guiding value in my life,” she says. “If all alumni give a small amount, the total (available for scholarships) can be substantial — and someone who has the aptitude, but not necessarily the financial resources, will have a chance to go to AU.”

“I got so much out of my learning with AU,” adds Renée Anderson, a 2008 graduate of the Master of Nursing (Generalist) program and a respected nursing lecturer at Thompson Rivers University who received two awards for teaching excellence in 2012. “The level of learning I was exposed to has made me a better teacher... It’s hard to describe, but I’m not the same person I was when I started at AU. My classmates and I are different teachers and nurses now because we think differently.”

The quality of her AU experience made it easy for her to give. “I got way more out of my education than I ever thought possible. Giving back is just the right thing to do.”

Nghiem Dang agrees wholeheartedly. “My donation is very little compared to what AU has given me. Without AU, I couldn’t fulfill my dreams. I feel an obligation and a responsibility to give something back, so AU can help other students.

“AU has no need to thank me for what I give. I thank AU.”

To donate to student awards or other areas of need at AU, visit: open.athabascau.ca/give
THE ARCHITECT OF HIS OWN FUTURE

The first recipient of the new Hutchinson scholarship uses the funds to chart a distinct path in architecture education.

BY CATHY NICKEL

CRAIG ROGERS HAS DRAFTED AN educational blueprint for his future, one that will see him build on several firsts.

Rogers is one of the first students to be enrolled in the new Post-Baccalaureate Diploma in Architecture offered at Athabasca University. He’s also the first recipient of the Ken and Janny Hutchinson Scholarship in Architecture, established at AU last year by donors wishing to invest in the future of the profession.

“It’s a big help to push my career forward,” he says. “I’ve been doing this for a long time, and it’s validation that I’m doing the right thing and that I should ... continue to pursue architectural studies.”
With two undergraduate degrees to his credit, Rogers works full-time as an intermediate technologist with a Vancouver architectural firm. He chose AU’s pioneering online program because he can’t easily attend university full-time due to career and family responsibilities.

The Hutchinson scholarship was established by Ralph and Janet Hutchinson in honour of Ralph’s brother, Ken, a leading Alberta architect for the past 40 years, and his wife Janny. The scholarship, which recognizes the professional and academic achievements of incoming students, is supported by an endowment that will enable AU to present $2,500 to two promising architecture students each year.

Rogers calls his award a huge relief. “I don’t have to worry about where the tuition money will come from for my next courses,” he says.

“The Hutchinsons are very involved in the industry, and it’s fantastic that they did this. I thanked them and told them I hope to use it to help better myself and the industry. One day, I hope I can do the same thing for a new student studying courses in architecture.”

“I’ve been doing this for a long time, and it’s validation that I’m doing the right thing and that I should ... continue to pursue architectural studies.”

Student awards are one of the key priority areas for which the Open Our World campaign is raising funds. Our donors have helped to create several awards. To learn more about these and other scholarships and bursaries at AU, visit AU Office of the Registrar Student Awards: registrar.athabascau.ca/studentawards/studentawards.php
AU Press launches a series of open-access course texts that will be available to students online for free.

BY ERIN OTTOSEN
POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION IS AN expensive prospect. Factor in textbooks, and the expense climbs even higher — books can cost well over a thousand dollars a year for each full-time student.

But with the rise of open educational resources (OERs), a huge variety of high-quality learning materials are becoming available online at no cost: multimedia lessons, academic journal articles, and yes, textbooks. As of 2013, Athabasca University’s AU Press is contributing to that growing supply of open course texts with its Open Pathways to Enriched Learning (OPEL) series. And embedded within this series is a pilot project exploring how to create texts from the materials that AU faculty are already producing for AU courses.

“(We’re) trying to determine what needs to be done to go from course to e-book,” says Kathy Killoh, acting director of AU Press. “If we can figure out what the steps need to be, we can do that with more courses.”

The pilot is a partnership between the press and AU’s Centre for Learning Design and Development (CLDD). “As the director of CLDD, one of my responsibilities is to find new ways of doing things,” says Dr. Cindy Ives, who’s also acting associate vice-president, academic, of learning resources. “CLDD is involved in the production of somewhere around 600 courses. And in the online world, there are many different models of courses.....So we’ve been thinking of new ways of doing things and then trying them out in pilot projects to see whether they work before we launch a huge implementation.”

This particular pilot involves CLDD identifying study guides from AU courses that are strong candidates for becoming full-fledged textbooks. The press then works with the study guide author to shape the manuscript into its new e-book incarnation. When the text is published, AU Press makes it available online as a free PDF but sells the hard copy and epub formats — the press’s practice for all its books.

“The study guides that some faculty have written are so complete and comprehensive that they provide content for a course in the same way a textbook would,” says Ives. “So it’s a natural evolution of ... the nature of a text in the context of an online course.”

The series is also a natural extension of the open-access mandate of both AU Press and the university itself, says Killoh.

Several AU Press books are already required reading for courses both at AU and other institutions, Killoh adds. “About 25 per cent of our titles are currently being used in courses,” she says.

One of the AU Press titles already adopted as a course text is being used by the author himself, Dr. Michael Dawson, a psychology professor at the University of Alberta. Dawson is also the author of one of the first titles to be published in the OPEL series, a text called *Mind, Body, World: Foundations of Cognitive Science*. It comes from a manuscript he prepared for his senior-level undergraduate survey course on cognitive science, and he’s already been teaching his students with some version of the text for two years.

“A lot of what I teach is pretty unique,” says Dawson, when asked why he writes books for his courses. “Also, with cognitive science, the traditional model for textbooks is ... different specialists writing different chapters because it’s such an interdisciplinary field.... There’s no thread that runs through it and tries to put it all together. So the reason I write the books is I like exploring the development of that thread. And students need that framework.”

The OPEL series is focusing on smaller texts like Dawson’s that suit junior- or senior-level courses and cover niches that are perhaps underserved or underrepresented in the academic publishing world, explains Connor Houlihan, the editor for the series.

The reason for this, says Houlihan, is that AU Press is a small press — with the staff and resources it has, it simply can’t compete with the behemoth textbook publishers that produce large survey textbooks for first-year courses with six- or seven-figure budgets.

But as the OER movement grows, and initiatives like the OPEL series take root, students of both AU and other institutions will find themselves in

“Anything that can be done to minimize the financial burden for students should be done.”
less and less need of the expensive texts produced by those behemoths. This is likely to happen sooner than later in B.C., for example, where the B.C. government announced in fall 2012 that it’s supporting the development of free, open, online textbooks for the 40 post-secondary courses in B.C. with the highest enrolment.

The business model for open-access course texts is just beginning to take shape, acknowledges Killoh. And developing more AU course study guides into course texts depends both on the success of the first AU-grown texts in the OPEL series and securing resources to do so. But support for the concept of open textbooks is clearly on the rise, and where there is a will, a way usually emerges.

Dawson recounts his experience buying some hard-copy math textbooks that he needed for a research project. Together, they cost close to $500. “That’s just ridiculous,” he says. “Anything that can be done to minimize the financial burden for students should be done.”

The OPEL series is a featured initiative in AU’s Open Our World campaign (see page 8 for more information). A private donation is covering a portion of the production costs for the first five books, and the first books in the series arrive in 2013.

For more information on the AU Press Open Pathways to Enriched Learning series, visit: aupress.ca/index.php/books/series#OPEL

For information on a new related project at AU, visit the eText Initiative: etext.athabascau.ca

Developing more AU course study guides into course texts depends both on the success of the first AU-grown texts in the OPEL series and securing resources to do so.
Turning people onto science is only natural

The Karvonens donate $250,000 to Science Outreach – Athabasca to inspire tomorrow’s stewards of nature.

BY CATHY NICKEL

SHARING THE BEAUTY AND WONDER OF the natural world has been a life’s work for Albert and Pirkko Karvonen. With their recent donation of $250,000 to Science Outreach – Athabasca, they hope to inspire a younger generation to become equally captivated by the great outdoors.

Over 36 years, the Karvonens combined their passions for the environment and for education by producing more than 120 wildlife films and documentaries through Karvonen Films. They gave audiences worldwide a window on animals, plants and landscapes in diverse habitats, with a focus on the boreal forest that surrounds the couple’s home near Amisk Lake, Alta.

They sold the company’s assets and are using the proceeds to invest in what they hold most dear: the future of nature. They did this, in part, by supporting Science Outreach – Athabasca.

“It can be hard to change an adult’s perception,” Pirkko explains, “but maybe we can provide an incentive for a young person to look at nature and develop an interest that stays with them through life — to see that the natural world needs to be kept natural, to enjoy it.”

“Kids are going to be the keepers and stewards of land in the future,” Albert adds. “They’ll be making the decisions about our lakes, rivers and forests, and even how we grow our food. We want to focus on the environment and create a greater awareness of nature — to try to increase the understanding of the issues we face.”

Science Outreach – Athabasca does just that. Operating as a standing committee of Athabasca University’s Centre for Science, the 12-year-old initiative promotes science awareness in the greater Athabasca area and beyond with community and school presentations, camps, field trips, a website and travelling exhibits open to children, youth, teachers, parents and anyone who wants to learn about science. It’s a labour of volunteer-driven love with many partners including community groups, AU faculty and staff and the Karvonens themselves, who have been involved for more than 10 years as both presenters and event participants.

The Karvonens’ donation, to be realized as $50,000 per year over five years, will enable Science Outreach – Athabasca to focus its energies on educating people rather than chasing funds, says Dr. Robert Holmberg, one of its founders and an AU professor emeritus of biology. And because “success breeds success” in the funding world, he hopes the Karvonens’ donation will help to leverage additional gifts.

The Karvonens share this hope.

“This is giving back, and we hope others donate, too,” Pirkko says.

“We’re all part of the natural world,” Albert adds. “Fundamentally, we all need the same things: air, water, a place to live, food.

“I want to give back to nature, to give back to the community where I was born and raised. What is the best investment? It is to educate youth to be more aware of nature, of the environment, to begin to understand the relationship we have with all living things.”

Visit Science Outreach – Athabasca: scienceoutreach.ab.ca

ABOVE
Albert and Pirkko Karvonen feed the birds at their country property.
Investing in AU means investing in community

Why Open Our World campaign chair Heather Kennedy supports the campaign’s community service area.

BY CATHY NICKEL

HEATHER KENNEDY IS DONATING TO Athabasca University because she believes it’s possible to make a difference in communities, and ultimately the world, one person at a time.

The chair of AU’s Open Our World fundraising campaign and member of the AU Board of Governors, along with her family, recently contributed $50,000 to support AU’s activities in community service, one of the four priority areas for the campaign.

“This area mattered most to me,” she says, explaining that every time AU helps a student realize a personal dream, entire families and communities stand to benefit.

That ripple effect is especially important in northern and remote communities that are being buffeted by unprecedented and rapid change. “My personal passion around changing the world rests with remote communities and, in particular, ensuring Aboriginal people have the opportunities to do the things they need to do to heal as nations and communities,” she says. “Education is one of the key tools for that.”

“I hope a community or the lives of a series of individuals in a remote community will be changed (by our donation) because they’ll have the ability to attend AU, or they’ll benefit from the research AU might do in their community or a program AU offers.”

Kennedy sees a distinctive university in AU, one that is true to the “Athabasca” in its name and has carved out a niche serving the north, yet, at the same, is breaking down barriers to higher education and innovating how students learn across Alberta and Canada and even around the world.

She recognizes that operating on the leading edge, as AU does, is a “tough” place to be and believes it’s imperative that people “continue to cherish and nurture an adaptable, flexible, nimble institution.” That is done, in part, by supporting AU through initiatives like Open Our World.

Kennedy and her campaign cabinet colleagues (see page 10) are leading by example, giving both time and dollars to send a message to potential donors that investing in Athabasca University also means investing in community. “What matters to me, matters to community, and it matters to AU,” she says.

For more information on the priority areas and initiatives featured in the campaign, visit Open Our World Campaign Priorities: open.athabascau.ca/campaign.
SEA PIE AND OTHER FOOD FOR THOUGHT

ON SPECIAL OCCasions, RESIDENTS in the North Bay, Ont., area cut themselves a slice of sea pie, a delicious concoction of multi-layered meat. Just outside the area, however, people have never heard of it.

Emily Weiskopf-Ball was intrigued by how food like sea pie defines community, and this curiosity led her to study the topic closely in her Master of Arts – Integrated Studies in Cultural Studies degree.

And now, “It has taken over my life,” she says, with a laugh, of her newfound focus on food studies. “I can’t go anywhere or talk to anyone without asking them about food. The program allowed me to ... discover something I’m passionate about.”

Her final paper was an autoethnographic study of foods made for special occasions as compared to foods that are made every day. She focused on French-Canadian and German traditions, reflecting her background, and she plans to narrow the focus as she continues her education with a PhD in human studies.

Weiskopf-Ball did her coursework at her home on Lake Nabonsing in Corbeil, Ont., 20 minutes east of North Bay, while also maintaining her job as a high school English teacher. Her AU studies, along with where she studied, gave her new insights into her own life. “Being able to do something personal, which had to do with my family and where I came from, and being able to look out (on the lake) and see where I came from, where I am and who I am, means a lot.”
“I BELIEVE COMMUNITY IS THE ANSWER to everything,” says Wendy Bergfeldt. “There isn’t a broadcaster who doesn’t believe that.”

A 25-year broadcast veteran and host of two CBC Radio shows airing across Nova Scotia’s Cape Breton Island, Bergfeldt has been enrolled in AU’s Master of Arts – Integrated Studies program since 2010 and is completing the Community Studies specialization. She says the degree is helping her scale a professional “brick wall” and honing her ability to ask critical, open-ended questions.

“(Journalists) ask the questions that people in our community want asked,” she explains. “We’re part of the community. We support the discourse. Understanding how communities work is a critical part of being able to do my job. Everything I’ve learned at AU, I’ve been able to apply.... I’m (also) getting a perspective of the country I didn’t have before, engaging with (other students) who have a range of geographical and professional experience.”

“I needed a variety of ways to look at community issues,” she says, when asked why she chose the Community Studies specialization. “The program offers me an opportunity to look at theoretical frameworks ... which help me frame better questions that serve my community.”

Asking questions that get to the heart of issues is vital to Bergfeldt’s community, which is experiencing extraordinary change. A once-strong industrial base continues to erode, and Cape Breton Island is being forced to reinvent itself. “You can’t help but be engaged, to feel a part of it,” she says.

“People have to get together to figure out how they are going to rebuild. It's evolving into a place that will be a model for the rest of the world — because they are answering all of the questions through community.”

STUDENT PROFILE
NAME: Wendy Bergfeldt
PROGRAM: MA - Integrated Studies in Community Studies
LOCATION: Sydney River, Nova Scotia

Get an inside look at CBC Nova Scotia and Bergfeldt’s work there as a producer on AU’s official YouTube channel: youtube.com/user/AthabascaUniversity

“The program offers me an opportunity to look at theoretical frameworks ... which help me frame better questions that serve my community.”
EMPOWERING THE PEOPLE OF HAITI

RHONDA HAMILTON WAS IN HAITI IN 2011 when she received the letter from Athabasca University saying she’d officially passed her final course. By then, the Moncton, N.B., native was already putting her Master of Nursing in Advanced Nursing Practice degree to good use, helping to transform lives and communities in one of the world’s poorest countries.

“I couldn’t do what I’m doing now, and be pursuing opportunities in international development, without this degree,” says Hamilton, who worked with the Medical Ambassadors of Haiti, an NGO, to promote sustainable development in rural communities. “Many of the tools I learned in my degree, I was able to implement in Haiti.”

Those tools included being able to develop projects, assess needs, discover assets, write proposals and negotiate — all valuable skills for making a long-lasting difference, Hamilton says. This, along with her degree’s focus on primary health care and emphasis on empowering communities and people to solve their own problems, aligns with Hamilton’s passion for helping others and her desire to work in international health care and community development.

“It’s very rewarding to connect communities in need, that know what they need and what they want to fix, with an NGO (that has) the resources to help them,” says Hamilton, who is seeking further employment near Haiti with her husband. “I believe in empowering and building communities. This degree will enable us to continue our work in Haiti.”

ALUMNA PROFILE
NAME: Rhonda Hamilton
PROGRAM: Master of Nursing: Advanced Nursing Practice (2011)
LOCATION: Moncton, New Brunswick

Watch Hamilton tell her story and see photos of her work in Haiti on AU’s official YouTube channel: youtube.com/user/AthabascaUniversity

Student Stories
JUNE

The AU community celebrates the graduation of 1,403 AU students from 80 countries with cheers, tears, applause and many thanks during the 2012 convocation weekend.

The first graduates of AU’s new Doctor of Education in Distance Education cross the stage at convocation. The first grad class is Joyce Helmer, Debra Walker and Agnieszka Palalas, who also gives a speech to the arts students graduating that day.

2012 APRIL

To encourage organ and tissue donation — which saved her life — BSc student Natalie Gerstmar helps to launch Ontario’s Be A Donor: Gift of 8 campaign by serving as a spokesperson.

MAY

Sharon Tripp and Amy Miedema of Northumberland Hills Hospital in Ontario receive an Outstanding Leadership Award from the hospital for developing policies related to newborn babies. Tripp and Miedema are students in the Nurse Practitioner stream of AU’s Master of Nursing.

Reid Gow, an undergraduate psychology student and a WHL hockey player, is named the league’s 2011-12 Scholastic Player of the Year. Learn about AU’s partnership with the WHL on pages 6-7.

AUGUST

Carol Huynh, a Master of Counselling alumna, wins a bronze medal in freestyle wrestling at the London 2012 Olympics. This is her second Olympic medal — she won a gold in 2008.

Emma Charles of St. Lucia is the first Canadian Virtual University Caribbean scholarship student to complete AU’s University Certificate in Counselling Women.

Shu Han (William) Chang, Ireti Falinlede and Steve Laberge, students in the Master of Science in Information Systems, are the first AU students to receive Alberta Innovates – Technology Futures awards.

Emma Charles of St. Lucia is the first Canadian Virtual University Caribbean scholarship student to complete AU’s University Certificate in Counselling Women.
SEPTEMBER

Natasha Boskic (MDE), an educational technology manager at the University of British Columbia, and Randall Sawka (BA), a filmmaker and writer, deliver presentations on how AU shaped their careers at alumni events in Vancouver and Victoria.

The Faculty of Graduate Studies holds the first ever AU graduate student conference, Research and the Knowledge Frontier in an Online Environment. The conference is set to take place again in September 2013.

Attend the conference in person or online: fgsconf.athabascau.ca

PhD student Carlos Contreras is the first student to study at AU under a Government of Canada Emerging Leaders in the Americas Program.

OCTOBER

Carter Yellowbird (MBA) receives a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Dream-catcher Foundation for his contributions to building First Nations communities.

OCTOBER-NOVEMBER

The winners of this year’s AU Alumni Awards are celebrated at receptions in Calgary and Toronto:

Denise Blair (MBA), executive director of the Calgary Youth Justice Society, receives the Rising Star Award for creating a life-changing leadership program for youth.

Denise Blair

Acting Staff Sgt. John Guigon (MA – Integrated Studies) receives the Future Alumni Award for his leadership in the Calgary Police Service.

John Guigon

Lindsay Hampton (BPA: Communication Studies) receives the Volunteer Service Award for fundraising achievements such as launching a new foundation called So Kids Can See.

Dr. Jeff Zabudsky (MDE), president and CEO of Sheridan College, receives the Distinguished Alumni Award for his many contributions to the post-secondary education sector.

Dr. Jeff Zabudsky

NOVEMBER

Mantracking: The Ultimate Guide to Tracking Man or Beast arrives in bookstores. The book is co-written by Nadine Robinson, a student in AU’s Doctor of Business Administration program, and the Mantracker himself, Terry Grant.

DECEMBER

Our Canada, a magazine from Reader’s Digest Canada, publishes a Christmas story by BMgmt student Tammy Gale. Gale was inspired to write the story partly by the AU writing courses she has taken as electives in her degree.
FEBRUARY

Master of Nursing student Brenda Enns receives the WNRCASN Graduate Student Research Award for her paper “Identity Development in Baccalaureate Nursing Education: A Study in Progress.”

The Rural and Remote Maternity Education program, a distance learning program for nurses created by two Master of Education in Distance Education students, goes online. Mariea Spray and Sue Erdman-Burton designed the program as part of their coursework for MDDE 605.

Janet Porter successfully defends her Doctor of Business Administration dissertation on February 13, making her the first graduate of this new AU degree.

MARCH

For the second year in a row, AU undergraduate business students take top honours at the CMA/CGA Alberta Board Governance Case Competition. Adam Chappell, Charles Gallucci, Aaron Jones and Sonja Vandermeer win second place and a $5,000 cheque.

Three BComm students, Bryce Schultz, Alexander Poulton and Scott Beaton, dub themselves the Calgary Traders and enter the Chicago Mercantile Exchange Group’s Commodity Trading Challenge. In the preliminary round they finish 14th out of 326 teams, and they’re the only team from Canada to make the final round. They’re also the first AU Faculty of Business team to participate in the challenge.

Two AU nursing alumni win 2013 CARNA Awards of Nursing Excellence. Kathleen Soltys, who completed a BN and went on to be one of the first grads of the Master of Health Studies in 2001, receives an Excellence in Administration award. Frankie Wong, who also completed both a BN and a Master of Health Studies at AU, receives an Excellence in Education award.

Tell us what’s new and win an iPad mini!

Are you a member of AU’s student and alumni community? Have you achieved a new milestone in your professional, academic or personal life? Share it with AU, and we’ll enter you to win an iPad mini — and your news will be considered for publication in the next issue of Open magazine and other AU communications.

HOW TO ENTER
1. Write a short summary of your new milestone. A few sentences will work just fine. Include your full name and, if applicable, your AU program and grad year.
2. Put it all in an email, and mention the contest in your email subject line.
3. Send your email to: aualumni@athabascau.ca

DEADLINE: MAY 31, 2013
Athabasca University Graduate Students' Association (AUGSA) is a student-run, diverse, and multi-faceted organization that aims to meet your needs as a graduate student at Athabasca University. WE ARE the official representative of all Athabasca University graduate students. WE ARE your advocate to the university and to the government. WE ARE committed to ensuring that your education is affordable, accessible, and of outstanding quality. WE ARE here to work for you, regardless of your program.

For more information
Web: www.augsa.com
Email: augsa@augsa.com
Phone: 1.866.625.5943

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