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We are an autonomous student newspaper owned and operated by Brunswick Publishing Inc., a non-profit, independent body.

We are a founding member of the Canadian University Press, and love it so. We are also members of U-Wire, a media exchange of university media throughout North America.

We publish weekly during the academic year with a circulation of 10,000.

Letters

Must be submitted by e-mail including your name, letters with pseudonyms will not be printed. Letters must be 600 words maximum. Deadline for letters is Friday at noon.

Editorial Policy

While we endeavour to provide an open forum for a variety of viewpoints and ideas, we may refuse any submission considered by the editorial board to be racist, sexist, libellous, or in any way discriminatory.

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UNB administration consistently sets poor example for its students



MUGWUMP

by
Tony von Richter

The handling of Varsity Reds situation another example of UNB's ineptness and its uncaring nature

The first reaction to last Wednesday's announcement that the Varsity Reds were reducing the number of varsity teams from 14 to 8 was that of shock, since very few people saw it coming.

While the content of the announcement was surprising, the UNB administration's handling of the situation was not as it was another unfortunate example of just how inept and disrespectful this supposed institution of "higher-learning" can be.

I could easily write thousands of words about all the previous examples of UNB's horrible planning and strategic decisions but we've got a limited amount of pages in this paper, so I'll have to save that for another time and just concentrate on the events of last week.

There are a number of problems with how the situation transpired last week, however the worst of which is how and when the information about the decision was distributed.

Rather than ensuring that every varsity athlete and coach that was directly affected by last week's decision was aware of the decision, UNB decided to send a press release to the media at

4:00 pm, about 30 minutes before the members of the women's hockey team were notified.

As much as everything else, that this decision was made in secret, that the teams and players affected by this had little to no input, that it appears that the decision was made so late into the year as to apparently minimize resistance to it, the fact that I knew before Leslie Axford or Terri Ryerson is inexcusable.

How would the Athletic department feel if in the midst of planning for next season, President John McLaughlin walked into their offices next week and told them not to bother since there would be no more funding for sports at UNB? Oh, and just to add insult to injury, the local media knew about this before they did.

Somehow, I doubt the department heads would stand for that or that the administration would treat their colleagues so poorly, so why is it acceptable for students to be treated in such a manner?

Unfortunately this is just the latest in a long series of examples of students being treated badly by the administration and has lead many to feel that the university doesn't care about us, that all we are is a student number with a dollar figure attached to us for how much tuition we still owe.

Of course, not everyone treats students in such an inconsiderate manner; luckily we've still got our professors and individual faculty administrations who care about us and our well-being, not just the well-being of our bank accounts.

If we're supposed to take pride in our school and respect those that run it, shouldn't the administration have that same pride and respect for us?

It should, but over the years, the UNB administration has routinely showed that it does not, and I can't think of a worse indictment of our university than that.

Blu-ray discs contribute to techno-affluence

by Kerri Breen,
The Muse
(Memorial University of Newfoundland)

ST. JOHNS (CUP) -- I still watch the video of Kindergarten Cop my grandmother taped off channel 10 in 1993. I know it was 1993 because the commercial breaks are mostly screens of news feed.

Sure the picture quality is poor, the sound is fuzzy, and those commercials about the Blue Jays winning the World Series are downright annoying, but it still works. And when Kindergarten Cop comes out on Blu-ray disc, probably digitally re-mastered with Arnie's outtakes and extra sparkles on the package, I'm totally going to spend my money on something else.

Buying stuff that you already can enjoy in another format is just plain wasteful. Gracefully side-stepping the movie collection overlap produced by another dreaded film format transition is a basic, painless way people can ever-so-slightly lighten the crippling load they place on the world's resources as consumers of gazillions of dollars worth of hollow, inconsequential widgets.

But now, as a result of the end of a mini-format war, consumers will be encouraged to buy another special platinum edition of The Lion King sooner than expected.

On Feb. 18, Toshiba announced they were discontinuing their rival to Sony's Blu-ray, the HD-DVD format. The struggle between the two multinationals, ongoing since the early part of the decade, proved to delay the format change. Not long after, publications from the Globe and Mail to the New York Post heralded Sony's product as victorious. The global dominance of the Blu-ray disc is now imminent.

As it's been assumed, pretty soon, the once-omnipresent DVD format will be obsolete, just as our faithful childhood medium, VHS tapes, were thrown out like Jazz from Fresh Prince Of Bel-Air.

Not that Blu-ray isn't an improvement on the DVD format – it holds much more information, it has better picture quality, and a catchy, yet dumb and futuristic sounding name.

To the casual viewer, these enhancements to your favorite films and television programs are probably negligible. Instead, implicitly, what you pay for is the hope that the expensive and new product can positively amend your aura, and make you look fashionable, rich, young, and the list goes on. The possession of such coveted objects really does function as a social lubricant and a litmus test for affluence.

It's no secret that advertisers spend a lot of money strengthening the connection between possessing fresh, shiny objects and being a desirable person.

This cycle of buying and temporary fulfillment (if you're lucky enough to have money) drives the kind of progress that the Blu-ray disc represents.

Nowadays that pretty much goes without saying. But a less obvious extension of that is the creepy, sad fact that identity is both forged and honed in part by consumer preferences.

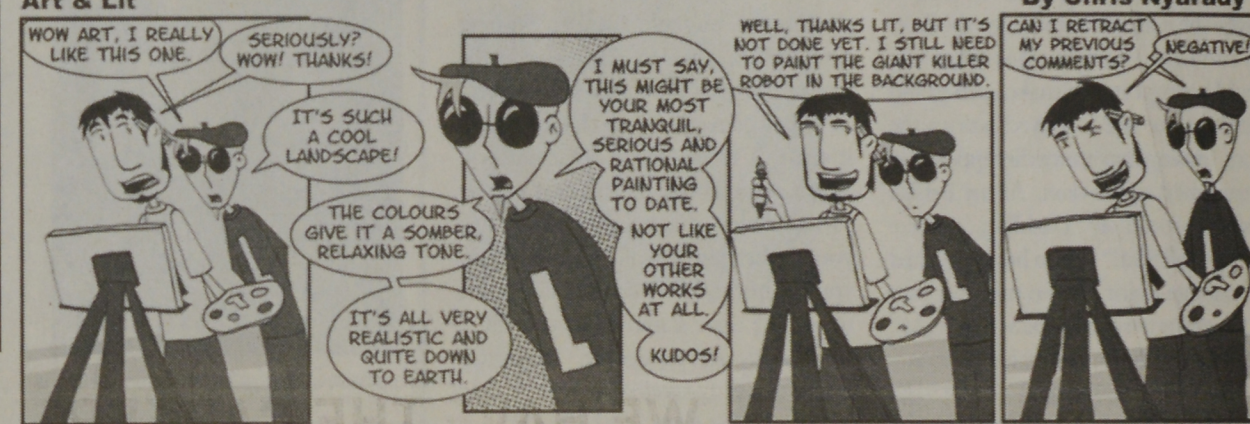
The worst part is that this message, this happiness-for-purchase arrangement, is exposed to people with, and without, the means to participate in vain consumption at the same time.

The result is the low-income government housing units near my apartment, decrepit, yet positively peppered with satellite dishes; and university students like myself, on the bus wondering whether my rent cheque is going to bounce, while listening to MP3s on my Bluetooth headphones. Because of the heavy social role these technologies play, and the high costs of not participating in consumer culture, many people sacrifice the basics just to compete.

Don't get me wrong – I'm not anti-technology. There have been many times when technological advancements have served to better the lives of the people who happen to be able to afford them. But the socially and environmentally sketchy implications that mindless technologies such as Blu-ray have are enough for me to skip out on the craze, and stick to watching Nan's old cassettes.

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By Adrian Binakaj
Nexus (Camosun College)

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