

Distance Learning Pilot Project

by Joan McCordic

On several occasions in recent years, Academy members involved in long range planning have discussed the potential for 'Distance Learning'. There are many interested seniors who are unable, for reasons of geography or disability, to attend our classes in person. Could they listen in on their computers?

Until now, the idea of testing such an outreach program has been dismissed because of the anticipated cost of its implementation and the uncertainty of its contribution to the Academy as a whole. An opportunity has now arisen that could allow the Academy to test the efficacy of a distance learning program through a pilot project. The Board has recently submitted an application for this pilot project to the Horizons for Seniors Program, requesting a grant of \$25,000. Horizons is a federal program, providing funding for community projects inspired or led by seniors, and we are encouraged by the fact that our submission has the enthusiastic support of the School of Continuing Studies at the University of Toronto.



Occupying St. James Park (L to R) Dugal Campbell, Brian O'Leary, Karin Foss, Margaret Robertson, Joan Campbell, Penelope Tyndale, Gabriele Dankert, Michael Foss and Josie Szczasiuk.

Should our application be successful, our first step would involve consultation with experts in the field of distance learning to discover what modifications in our current format and technology would be required. In the second step we would select one of our workshops for the test and set up a classroom appropriately.

Finally, we would evaluate the impact of the experimental program on distance learners, and on the Academy members in the classroom. The future of distance learning will depend on its successful integration into our existing program, and the pilot project would enable us to assess that possibility.

Yes, your opinion IS important!

by Debrah Weiss

At the end of the first term, all Academy members are asked by the Curriculum Committee to evaluate their workshops. Last year for the first time, we also asked Facilitators to comment on their workshop experiences and make suggestions for the future. You may be interested to hear how all this has benefitted the Academy. A few years ago we learned that many people were having problems with the audio-visual equipment in the classrooms. As a result, **Karen Melville** and **Robert Sherrin**, assisted by other Academy members, led AV training sessions last fall. The Board also hired

a student, Ryan Jansen, who conducted training sessions, along with **Sharon Harris**, during the second term. We learned, too, that there were concerns about the quality of some presentations. This issue was addressed at the 2011 Facilitators' Forum, where the theme was "What is the Facilitators' role in helping workshop participants make good presentations?" It was agreed that each term outstanding presentations would be highlighted at the Wednesday Forums. While Facilitators are always happy to read positive comments, they also appreciate constructive criticism and learning how their workshops can be improved. Most of the Facilitators also gave valuable information back to the Curriculum Committee.

The input helps us programming for the next Calendar year.

When you get the evaluation forms this year, please take the time to make comments. Your views really do help to make the Academy better and better.

Events Calendar

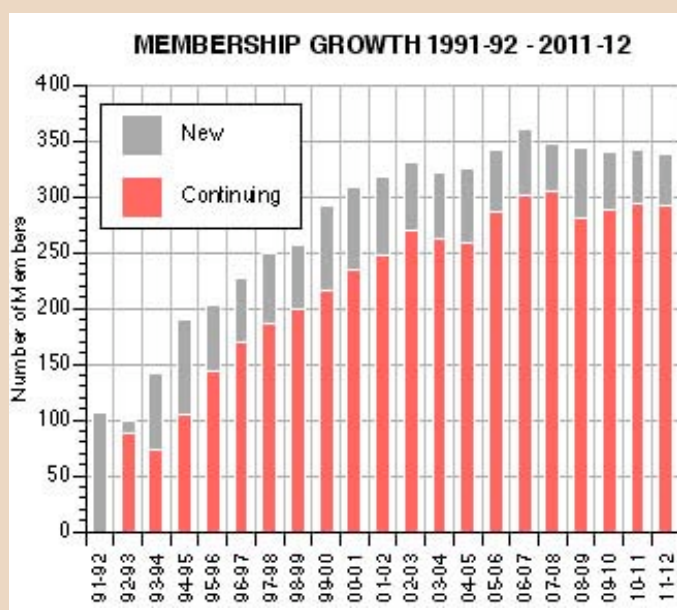
Nov. 16	Last Fall Forum
Nov. 18	Board Meeting
Dec. 2	Internet Lecture #3
Dec. 2	Workshops End
Dec. 9	Holiday Lunch
Dec. 9	Board Meeting
Jan. 10	Workshops Begin
Jan. 20	Board Meeting
Feb. 13	Mailing

Boomers Wanted! by Gillian Long

This chart shows the proportional growth of the Academy divided into new and continuing members. If you study this, as well as the chart in the August issue showing Academy members by year of birth, it becomes glaringly obvious that we need to attract more new and younger members if the Academy is to continue to flourish.

This is a matter of great concern to the Board, and so the Communications Committee has been directed

to ask various professional organizations, such as retired teacher groups, to distribute our brochures. However, as we all know, word of mouth is the best advertisement. Please encourage your slightly younger friends and acquaintances to consider joining the Academy. Invite them to listen to the Spring Talks, which make a good introduction to our activities, and they can read all about us at www.allto.ca.



Workshops, Then and Now by Gillian Long

As was Tweeted in the August edition of *Academy News*, **Margaret Robertson** has been very busy developing an Archives site on our website. It makes fascinating reading for anyone interested in the history of the Academy. I was particularly struck by the development of our curriculum over the years – and what very good value for money it is. In August 1991 the very first syllabus offered only eight sessions: Contemporary Arts; Economics; History (of the Middle East); Immigrant Literature in Canada; Philosophy; Politics (the future of Canada); Psychology; Social Ethics and Policy. \$100 entitled a member to enroll in any or all workshops.

By the next term the option of Psychology had been replaced by Asian Studies (of the Pacific Rim) and by Western Heritage – an exploration of the Old Testament.

After that first year there was steady growth. Members could choose three workshops each semester, out of the fifteen, including the first Film study group, offered in 1992-3 and the annual cost was \$150. A Music study group was first introduced in 1993-4.

By the time the Academy celebrated its tenth anniversary in 2001-2 there was a choice of 40 stimulating workshops and the fee was only \$130.

The variety of subjects offered over the

years is quite remarkable. Every year the same favourite workshops are supplemented by an astonishingly eclectic assortment of choices, a testament to the wide-ranging interests and knowledge of our members. To continue this trip down memory lane I encourage you to visit <http://allto.ca/calendars.html>.

The Academy needs YOU! by Sandra Gold

The beginning of the fall term is always an exciting time at the Academy for many reasons. Not the least of these is meeting and getting to know new members. They are always keen and often bring with them new interests and ideas. Soon, we hope, today's new members will be among our facilitators, committee members, and board members. But in the meantime, there are many ways they can help out. They may be technically savvy assisting with classroom equipment or the website. They can offer to lead one of the Academy Walks or take photos for the website or newsletter at events they attend. All members, new and old, are encouraged to volunteer their time and ability in some way. Meeting many more of your colleagues and working with them means being more involved in the life of the Academy, and ultimately getting more out of it for yourself. As Volunteer Coordinator, I am always happy to connect people who want to help. So feel free to contact me at 416-782-7236 or sandrag@primus.ca.

Internet Lectures by Dugal Campbell

On Friday October 7 the first of three "Internet" lectures took place in room 5 at Knox. The members who attended took part in an experiment: no presentation was made by a member of the Academy. The 27 members present first listened to a lecture by Prof. Richard Wilkinson, an epidemiologist at the University of Nottingham who presented data to show that, in advanced societies (such as Canada) social ills are associated with social inequality: the greater the inequality within a society the greater the social damage. The claims made led to a lively discussion by the attending members - not all of whom agreed with Wilkinson's analysis.

The experiment is intended to find out if presentations drawn from the Internet followed by an opportunity to discuss the lecturer's thesis (in the usual Academy way) can be the basis for a worthwhile event. The members present on Oct. 7 gave a resounding 'thumbs up'.

Two more lectures are planned for the current term (on November 4, **Linda Tu** will lead a discussion of lectures on the manufacture of body parts by bio-engineers and on December 2, **Josie Szczasiuk** will lead a discussion after a lecture on the morality of murder). Three similar events are planned for the Winter term.

Potluck Picnic at Nancy O'Connor's Farm

Right: Host Nancy O'Connor shows Academicians, **Susan Ladle, Gabriele Dankert** (Special Events Chair) and **David Brodie** her farm and stables.

Far Right: President, Jim Pike, expressing his and the Academy's appreciation to **Nancy** for her warm and welcoming hospitality.



PHOTOS: OLIVER LONG

Moylena Fall Colour Walk

by Gillian Long

An enthusiastic group enjoyed a perfect fall day at the Russell's beautiful 'Moylena' in the Albion Hills. Two walks were organized - a hilly one for striders and a more leisurely one for strollers. The strollers (pictured) were delighted by a surprise visit to the neighbouring herd of exotic Gypsy Vanner horses. Later, everyone enjoyed a convivial picnic by the barn. Thank you, Aubrey and Nancy, for a wonderful day!



Above: A Gypsy Vanner poses for photographer, **Oliver Long**. **Right: (L to R) Linda Tu, Edith Howard, Margot Johnson, Gillian Long, Nancy Russell** and a neighbour, **Jack**.



PHOTO: OLIVER LONG

Superb Start to Wednesday Forums

by Sharon Harris

There was a great turnout, including many new members, for the first Forum, "Presenting Our Presenters".

Everyone was delighted with our three speakers who presented condensed versions of their talks from last season.



Sue Kralik introduced us to various types of Arabic literature, both ancient and contemporary. She noted how the exquisite language of the *Qur'an* has influenced Arabic writing. Through evocative examples of poetry in translation, Sue introduced us to an important art form.



Rick Guisso began his presentation on the objectivist philosophy of Ayn Rand by asking us whether we would take John Galt's pledge in *Atlas Shrugged*.

Rick described Rand's philosophy under the headings epistemology (reason), ethics (rational self-interest), politics (individual rights) and aesthetics (value judgements) and related Rand's viewpoint to the current political trend in North America. Rick concluded by again asking the group whether they would take "the pledge". Nobody would, but everyone enjoyed Rick's presentation.



And finally, **Rosalyn Wosnick** gave a compelling presentation of how Edna Ferber's 1926 novel "Show Boat" was transformed into many stage productions and films.

Boldly portraying racial issues, the Kern-Hammerstein version of 1927 was the first racially integrated musical. Ferber wrote about society as it was at the time and Rosalyn revealed how much sensitive material was altered to make "Show Boat" both successful commercially and more acceptable to its audiences.

The Talks Committee hopes to see you at all our upcoming forums! •

PHOTOS: SHARON HARRIS



20 YEARS AND GROWING

59 St. George Street
Toronto ON M5S 2E6
416-946-5185
info@allto.ca
www.allto.ca

*offering programs for
adult learners in
collaboration with the
School of Continuing
Studies at the
University of Toronto*

Academy News

Editor

Gillian Long
416-447-6927
gillian.long@
utoronto.ca

Ass't Editor

Brian O'Leary
416-860-0747
brianoleary@rogers.com

Production Manager

Josie Szczasiuk
416-769-8942
szcz@rogers.com

The Academy remembers...

Dorothy Nicholson died on September 15th at the remarkable age of 105. We send our condolences to her family and friends. •

Academy Tweets

by Mary Doucette

“Academy Tweets” is a new column in the Newsletter, which we hope will help you to get to know your fellow members. If you or others at the Academy have done some interesting travel, developed a new or old passion, or are involved in activities of interest to Academy members, please send this information to **Mary Doucette** at mary.doucette@sympatico.ca.

* **Unique religious architecture**, abundant bird life, and haunting liturgical music captivated the well-travelled **Jennifer Young** on her recent trip to Armenia.

* **Having seen a copy of the Academy Calendar**, a librarian at the TPL arranged for **Linda Tu** to give a lecture series at the libraries on current developments in cosmology, earth sciences, and human biology.

* **Tafelmusik, lawn bowling, folk music, revue cinema, adult literacy, swimming, and the Echo Women’s Choir** are some of the passions of new member **Janet Broadley**.

* **Venice, Dubrovnik, Tunisia, Gibraltar, Rio, Buenos Aires, Cape Horn, and Chile** are part of a 30 day cruise coming up for **Rene Laukat**.

* **First time grandfather, Bill Hall** enjoys travel, photography and reading. He admires the works of Matisse, Goya, Turner, W. Morris, L. Mumford, P. Ackroyd, P. Gay, H. Mankell, and R. Rendell. •

Keeping up with the Walks

by Rene Laukat

With much thanks to our fabulous leader, **Mark Abbott**, what a totally splendid way to finish our Academy Walks season!! The sun was shining, the birds were chirping.....and the salmon running their treacherous route up the



Web Challenges

by Brian O'Leary

As you look at the Academy's web page - and we'll presume you do - we wonder if you might suggest how it could be more reflective of the Academy, and also any ways it might be easier to trail through. If you have not yet added the RSS feature to your own computer, the Board encourages you to do so without delay. You then automatically receive any news, changes and announcements from your Academy. All *Academy News*, Spring Talks brochures, notes of all annual meetings, as well as all *Calendars* dating back to 1991 are available on that same web site. Use it. Enjoy it. allto.ca •

Get your thinking caps on!

The Curriculum Committee is starting to look for both new workshop ideas as well as people to facilitate or co-facilitate for the next academic year. Flyers have already been posted in the two classrooms. New on our website this year is an on line form. Please go to <http://allto.ca/curriculum.html> to submit your ideas for new workshops and possible facilitators.

Humber River, to their spawning grounds and demise. We, on the other hand, headed down-stream to the shady terrace of the Dark Horse Pub for sustenance and libation. Many thanks to all the walk leaders and all of you who were able to participate in these weekly explorations of Toronto's neighborhoods and trails.

Although the Academy Walks programme is now over until April, 2012, for those of you who do not wish such a long hiatus in organized walking, there are a number of options. The Toronto Bruce Trail Club offers many urban hikes throughout the year, readily accessible and with details available on their website. As well, the Seniors' Hiking Club of Toronto has walks every Wednesday leaving at 11 a.m. from various TTC accessible locations all year round. They do not have a website but I'll be happy to provide a schedule of walks on request. Email me at rlaukat@rogers.com.

Wishing you many happy trails! •