How I spent my summer holidays... not

» DOUG PEERS, DEAN OF ARTS

Like many academics who choose the spring and summer as their non-teaching term, I look forward to this time to regroup, reflect, and catch up on research and writing. In my case, it usually involves bunkering down in my happy place, aka the British Library. Three years ago I found a series of files that had eluded me since the days of my dissertation research and since then I head over a couple of times a year to work through nearly two hundred volumes of unindexed files. It is sheer bliss, especially when I reward myself for a good day’s trawling with a trip to a gallery followed by a pint or two in one of my favourite pubs.

Unbeknownst to me, my body had a different plan this year. On the evening of 14 June, in what has become euphemistically known as ‘the episode’ or ‘the event’, I experienced a myocardial infarction (sounds more posh than a heart attack and more honest than an ‘episode’). I did not see it coming, did not even know it was happening. It was only when I came to in Intensive Care the next morning, covered with wires and hoses, that I learned what had happened and realized how lucky I was. I got home just
before 10:00 from a university event and had sat down to read the paper. That is my last memory. Apparently, I collapsed soon after. Our dog became alarmed and alerted my family who did CPR until the paramedics arrived with the paddles to jumpstart me. It was off to St Mary’s where, once stabilized, various options were considered, and in the end we opted for a quintuple bypass. Go big or go home seemed to be a point of agreement between my cardiac surgeon and myself.

The surgery went well, the level of care at St Mary’s is first-rate, and after two weeks I was told the prognosis is good, provided I take rehab seriously (I can’t treat bacon and caffeine as two of the most important food groups). My time chez St Mary’s coincided with the European Cup. Most of the patients in the cardio ward were middle aged males, and in keeping with local demographics, many were of central or southern European origins. At game time, we would either meet in the lounge or in my room, dragging IVs and heart monitors behind us. In hindsight, I don’t think it was a coincidence that the crash cart was strategically placed outside my room. Fortunately, England could be counted upon to exit early in its predictably graceless manner thereby reducing my stress load.

Lifestyle changes are afoot. Breakfast meetings (ironically I had one on the 14th) will now have to have a heart smart option – Eggs Benedict will become but a memory. Fiber is becoming my new best friend and I am slowly coming to terms with kale, chia seeds, and hemp hearts. The biggest challenge has been adjusting to a largely caffeine-free life – I get to go wild with one caffeinated coffee a day, otherwise, it is decaf. My doctor has sternly informed me that the 12 to 15 cups of coffee I regularly consumed were not good for the ticker (and then sentenced me to another round of hemp hearts as penance). I have spent much of the past two weeks testdriving different decaff beans for my espresso maker (and thanks to a number of folks who have sent samples for me to try).

I am grateful to everyone in our office for stepping up and ensuring the smooth running of the Faculty while I was in the hospital and during my subsequent recuperation at home. Thanks also to everyone for their kind words of support and encouragement. I would also like to take this opportunity of welcoming Julia Roberts as Acting Associate Dean – Julia will be filling in for Bill Chesney who is taking a much deserved and long overdue sabbatical.

But most importantly, I am writing this to urge anyone who like me has studiously avoided regular checkups to book an appointment with their family doctor. I cheated death, but was damned lucky to have my family at hand. An hour earlier I was driving on the freeway – 10 days later I would have been alone in a bedsit in London.

P.S. A couple of the more entrepreneurial chairs have discovered that one of the cognitive side effects of cardiac arrests and open heart surgery is short term memory loss, and have tried to convince me that just prior to checking out I had approved a bunch of hires. Nice try!
The Arts Staff Advisory Council (ASAC) hit the ground running this year, expanding on projects from 2015 as well as launching a number of new initiatives. We have an engaged group of staff who are motivated to enhance the Arts community as well as expand the resources available to staff. We’d like to share this overview of what ASAC has facilitated for staff members so far in 2016.

We offered three professional development workshops: the SkillsCan assessment, a program to help identify strengths and interests; and a resume and interview workshop to provide staff with the necessary tools to progress in their career.

In the spring we held another successful Coffee Break (it’s on us!) in the Arts-Environment Garden, this time encouraging everyone to BYOM (bring your own mug) supporting the University’s sustainability goals in our daily practices on campus. Several dedicated ASAC members participated in the UWaterloo CanBuild competition for which we collected over 170 food items for the Feds Food Bank.

Two new healthy workplace initiatives were started targeting physical and psychological health. The Mindfulness Meditation: A Stress Reduction Program ran from May to June with the purpose of developing greater emotional balance, health, and well-being as well as interpersonal and work coping skills. Free weekly yoga for Arts staff was started in June with the support of the UW Staff Association’s Staff Excellence Fund and is ongoing until April 2017.

We hope you, our colleagues, have enjoyed and benefited from these activities – and that more of you plan to join us in the near future! In the fall term we plan to continue with staff support initiatives, such as a custom OHD workshop, peer networking events, and the continuation of our coffee breaks. And just a reminder, we send all ASAC event announcements via email to all Arts staff members – so watch your inbox for emails with “sent on behalf of ASAC” in the heading.

ASAC posts all our meeting agendas and minutes on our webpages. As always, we encourage staff to contact any council member with ideas and suggestions.

Finally, I would like to wish everyone a wonderful end of summer and a warm welcome back to another academic year!
The secret Arts-Environment garden

» MEGAN HOOD | COMMUNICATIONS AND GRADUATE RECRUITMENT OFFICER

With all of the construction on campus, the Arts-Environment garden remains a lush, green sanctuary amongst the concrete and glass. It is one of the best-kept secrets in Arts but work-study student Aneetta Raviraj is doing her best to change that.

“I love planting - it’s something I used to do a lot with my dad so this job was the perfect fit.” Before her placement, Aneetta didn’t know about the garden, but she now spends a lot of her time here identifying plants, removing weeds, watering flowers, and performing general care and maintenance.

Aneetta is hoping to spread the word about the garden through social media (the garden has its own Twitter account!) and other promotional channels on campus.

“The team behind the garden really wants to keep native plants on campus and show off this beautiful space. I’m also happy to see a lot of butterflies and bees - we’re really helping to prolong the lives of pollinators in the area.”

The public garden project was spearheaded in 2010 by two graduate students in Environment, alongside faculty and staff from both faculties, with the goal of creating a peaceful green space for anyone on campus to enjoy.
I am thrilled to let you know that the Dean of Arts Office and Arts Undergraduate Office are among the pioneering units on campus to implement and expand the Green Office Program led by the Sustainability office.

The program is a tangible way to make an impact in your department. It empowers participants with tools, knowledge, and peer learning to encourage sustainable behaviours and practices. It recognizes departments for their achievements through a common checklist, and opens opportunity for creativity, collaboration, and change.

In fact, the Dean of Arts and Arts Undergraduate offices were the first on campus to achieve Bronze Green Office certification. This means we fulfill a range of sustainable practices within the offices. These practices are (or should be) common-sense habits such as paper-use reduction strategies, compost collection, light usage guidelines, commuter strategies, and so on.

Beginning in May, our two offices combined forces to create the Arts Green Office Team with two key goals: 1. to reach Silver and then Gold Green Office certification within our own offices; 2. to grow the initiative across the Faculty of Arts. And this is where YOU, other units in Arts, come into the green picture.

How it works

The Green Office (GO) program is grassroots-driven. It supports ambassadors from each participating department or unit to take five steps to improve the sustainability of their office:

1. **GO Ambassador**: this step empowers department/unit champions
2. **GO Check**: ambassadors evaluate current office practices with a checklist
3. **GO Pledge**: members of the department make a Green Office participation pledge
4. **GO Action**: ambassadors lead, delegate, and implement new practices in their department

Feel free to contact the Arts Green Office Team Chair (Marina Ivanova) for more information on how to get involved in sustainability initiatives in Arts. If you would like to join the Green Office Ambassador network and be a representative for your unit, contact the Sustainability Office Coordinator (Mat Thijssen).

We would like to make the Faculty of Arts a leader in sustainably on campus, but we cannot do it without your participation. Join us and be part of the action... starting with our Waste-Free Picnic in the Arts-Environment Garden on August 18.
Hagey Hall hub opening soon (yes, you can help)

The Hagey Hall Hub stands proud. Almost ready to welcome new and returning students.

Third-floor treehouse overlooking the atrium below - otherwise, to be known as the quiet study zone.

Another room with a view: the second-floor treehouse - otherwise, to be known as the group project room.

View of atrium and food services outlet on left; the glass elevator shaft is on the right.

Looking out (and upward) from the front entrance - lots of windows, glass walls, and natural light.

Feedback, please

Inside Arts is published each term. Comments, ideas, submissions are always welcome. Please contact Wendy Philpott at wphilpott@uwaterloo.ca.