



UBC REPORTS



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Library heritage heart beats strong in new Barber Learning Centre

BY GLENN DREXHAGE

How do you take one of the oldest icons at UBC and transform it into a cutting-edge learning hub at the heart of the newest building on campus?

With a lot of skill, patience, energy and improvisation.

Those are some of the qualities that Dan Bock and a cadre of specialists employed while refurbishing the historic core of UBC's Main Library, located at the heart of the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre. The standout feature of the Library core is the Chapman Learning Commons, a tech-savvy space that's been painstakingly restored to match its previous incarnation as closely as possible.

"The refurbished core is a fantastic space," says Bock, the senior project manager for UBC Properties Trust. "I don't know of anyone who was involved with it – and with the Chapman room in particular – who doesn't go 'Wow' when they see it. I've got to say it's exceeded expectations in terms of how close it is to its original state."

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Project manager Dan Bock, left, Simon Neame in the newly restored Chapman Learning Commons.

Wade Huntley: on deck for disarmament

BY LORRAINE CHAN

Last month, UBC disarmament scholar Wade Huntley spent six days aboard the USS Nimitz, a U.S. military aircraft carrier then deployed near Okinawa, Japan.

The admiral invited him onto the flag bridge where he watched fighter jets being launched from the ship's deck. But more important, Huntley was able to introduce broader thinking to his listeners.

At the request of the U.S. Navy's Regional Security Education Program, Huntley gave briefings to about 200 people, among them the strike group's admiral, commanders, jet pilots and non-commissioned officers.

He spoke to them on matters such as global nuclear proliferation, North Korea, Kim Jong-Il, U.S. relations with Japan and South Korea, and the repercussions of military intervention in East Asia.

"My job is to ask decision makers how they're framing their issues so they can consider



Wade Huntley aboard the USS Nimitz.

alternatives and long-term consequences," says Huntley, Director of the Simons Centre for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation at UBC's Liu Institute for Global Issues.

The Simons Centre explores new possible legal and political frameworks, while producing analysis and insights on military threats and global governance.

It is the only university-based centre for research, education and advocacy on disarmament and global security, says Huntley.

He agrees that it was at times surreal to raise these issues with the very people who would be carrying out any military actions against North Korea. But to their credit, he says, many were having heated debates about the

U.S. presence in Iraq, with as many skeptics as supporters.

Huntley stressed for his audiences the "bedeviling challenges" inherent when asking other nations to give up their nuclear ambitions.

"We have to engage in a way that promotes strengthening the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty while reducing the attraction of nuclear weapons."

A case in point is the need for different approaches for North Korea and Iran, he says. "In the West we view them as similar problems, as rogue nations, but they are very different countries, and a policy that works in one case might not in the other."

Paradoxically, says Huntley, Kim Jong-Il could cut a deal tomorrow, trading economic aid and political concessions in return for not developing nuclear weapons. However, he says, "It's a closed, xenophobic dictatorship and what he says goes."

Iran by comparison is a more open, vibrant country, he says, where political factions compete

and citizens enjoy access to the Internet, television and satellite. "However, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has less freedom to cut a deal because of competing political factions."

The disarmament debate caught Huntley's attention at an early age. He grew up in Vallejo, a town 40 kilometres north of San Francisco that sprung up in the shadow of the now-defunct Mare Island Naval Shipyards – once the largest on the West Coast. Huntley's father, an electrical engineer, worked there maintaining the sub sonar systems on nuclear submarines.

"Our backyard faced a cow pasture and beyond that I could see the bridge leading to the shipyards," recalls Huntley.

It dawned on him one day while looking out the window that if war erupted, Mare Island would be a prime target for Soviet nuclear missiles. "And that fireball would have rolled across the pasture right into my bedroom window," says Huntley.

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IN THE NEWS

Highlights of UBC media coverage in March 2008. COMPILED BY BASIL WAUGH

Social Corporate Responsibility, Honorary Degree Mark Nobel Laureate Muhammad Yunus' UBC Visit

As part of UBC's Centenary celebrations, renowned economist **Muhammad Yunus**, winner of the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize, received an honorary degree and participated in a colloquium on social corporate responsibility.

Yunus has extended more than \$6 million in small loans to more than 7 million of the world's poor through Grameen Bank, which he founded in Bangladesh in 1983. These loans have helped thousands, many of them women, to achieve financial independence.

Global TV, CBC Newsworld and *Vancouver Sun* reported on Yunus' visit. At a sold-out evening event, the microfinance guru gave the inaugural Michael Smith Memorial Nobel lecture.

U.S. Rush to Produce Corn-based Ethanol Will Worsen "Dead Zone" in Gulf of Mexico: UBC Study

The U.S. government's rush to produce corn-based ethanol as a fuel alternative will worsen pollution in the Gulf of Mexico, increasing a "Dead Zone" that kills fish and aquatic life, according to UBC researcher **Simon Donner**.

In the first study of its kind, Donner and a co-author quantify the effect of biofuel production



Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus receiving a UBC honorary degree.

on nutrient pollution in a waterway. Their findings are published in the *Proceedings of the National Journal of Sciences*.

"This rush to expand corn production is a disaster for the Gulf of Mexico," says Donner. "The U.S. energy policy will make it virtually impossible to solve the problem of the Dead Zone."

Reuters, Agence France Presse, Science, and newspapers across Canada and Australia reported Donner's research.

Blue Whale Skeleton Finds Permanent Home at UBC: Canadian First

The skeleton of a blue whale that washed up on Prince Edward Island 20 years ago will have a permanent home at UBC's new

Beatty Biodiversity Museum.

"I have to say there is probably no worse smell in the world than a dead whale," said UBC marine biologist **Andrew Trites**, who will extract the bones and ship them to B.C., where they will be cleaned up and pieced back together.

The Museum, scheduled to open in late 2009, will be the first attraction in Canada to exhibit the skeleton of the largest animal ever to have lived – bigger than any dinosaur. The UBC exhibit will be one of only five in North America.

Media outlets across Canada covered this story, including *CBC News, Montreal Gazette, Ottawa Citizen, Calgary Herald, Vancouver Sun, CBC News* and *Global TV*.

LETTER to the EDITOR

I am writing to tell you how inspired we were by the article by Basil Waugh, "Going paperless: here's how it's done" in the February UBC Reports.

I am the Manager of Logistics here at UBC, and in our Courier and Freight division we were printing from 800 to 1,000 sheets of paper, double-sided, every month.

We had the additional tasks and costs of sorting, filing and storing the documentation.

I am thrilled to report that we no longer print. We worked with our wonderful IT support team, set up

a dedicated drive, and now we sort, file and store our files electronically.

The integrity of the data is better, the ability to retrieve data is more efficient and the total cost for me was \$52. This has been a very affordable investment, not to mention the wonderful feeling of doing our part in reducing our impact on energy, resources, and the planet.

Victoria Wakefield
Manager of Customs and Logistics
Business Operations

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UBC celebrates 100th anniversary of University Act

Premier Gordon Campbell and UBC president Stephen Toope celebrated the Centenary of the 1908 University Act that created UBC as B.C.'s first post-secondary institution, signing a rededication of the act exactly 100 years after its original March 7, 1908 signing.

"For 100 years, UBC has played an important role in the personal growth of thousands of students, and in the growth of B.C. as a province," said Campbell. "Today we honour a century of accomplishments and milestones. At the same time, we look towards new frontiers for UBC students and faculty to explore, and to a bright future for this distinguished institution."

"We are honoured and delighted to celebrate the Centenary of UBC," said Toope. "UBC's founders set us on the path we walk today, and we are daily in the debt of the provincial government for its ongoing support."

"UBC is one of the world's great universities, but I believe its greatest contributions have yet to be realized," Toope added. "In our first century, we have built the foundation necessary to propel a great city, a great province and a great nation into a new century of challenges and opportunities."



UBC President Stephen Toope and Premier Gordon Campbell rededicate the 100-year-old University Act.

Centenary events have included a visit by 2006 Nobel Peace Prize winner and microfinance pioneer Muhammad Yunis, who received a UBC honorary degree and participated in a colloquium on corporate social responsibility; UBC Celebrate Research Week, a public showcase of UBC research that touches lives and communities, and The Dream Healer opera and accompanying mental health symposium.

For more information on Centenary events, visit www.100.ubc.ca.

UBC audio tours: Technology meets tradition

In honour of the Centenary, UBC has launched a new audio tour to guide campus visitors through the university's past and present.

Commissioned by the Alumni Association, this project gives visitors self-guided cellphone tours of 15 campus landmarks, including the new Irving K. Barber Learning Centre and the University Centre – site of the 1968 Faculty Club student invasion.

The tour can be seen and heard at www.alumni.ubc.ca/100

LIBRARY continued from page 1

That's quite an achievement, considering that the Main Library first opened its doors in 1925 (the Chapman Learning Commons, which opened in 2002, is the result of a \$1-million gift from UBC alumni Dr. Lloyd and Mrs. Katherine Chapman). More than 75 years later, as construction began on the Learning Centre, the Library's heritage core needed to be seismically upgraded.

Some surprises awaited the crew. Some trusses atop the 40-foot Chapman walls were rotten.

Steel support replacements were grafted on the trusses, providing crucial strength and helping distribute the weight load.

Meanwhile, deficient concrete lying hidden in some of the Heritage Core's beams had to be removed and replaced with newer, stronger concrete.

In the midst of all these changes, a team of master craftspeople – whose talents include plasterwork, finished carpentry, stained glass revitalization and stone masonry – worked to ensure that the "new" Heritage Core is as faithful to its original appearance as possible. Bock, for one, is



UBC students pose on the unfinished Chemistry Building during the 1922 Great Trek.

Oldest UBC building gets extreme makeover

As UBC toasted its first Centenary, the oldest building on its Vancouver campus reopened with new state-of-the-art research and learning facilities and its historic charms intact.

The renewal of the Chemistry Building is the latest project of UBC Renew, a \$120-million partnership between UBC and the provincial government designed to breathe new life into older buildings on B.C.'s oldest and largest university campus.

Construction of the Chemistry Building began in 1914 but halted due to World War I and didn't resume until 1923, following the historic Great Trek of 1922 when 1,200 students marched from a temporary campus near 12th and Cambie to the Point Grey campus, urging the provincial government to continue building UBC.

Major discoveries have been made in the building, including the first noble gas compound and technology that led to the creation of QLT, UBC's best known spin-off company.

"The Chemistry Building is synonymous with UBC's history," said UBC President Stephen Toope at the official opening. "The historic photo of students congregating in the concrete skeleton of this building epitomizes our student activism and the birth of the Point Grey campus. Restoring its past grandeur and modernizing the facility, all the while improving safety and sustainability, is what

UBC Renew is all about."

One of the three buildings in the original 1912 campus plan – the other two are the Library and the Power Plant – the renovation includes new lecture theatres, student space, open laboratories with enhanced safety features and a building seismic upgrade.

In addition to preserving a heritage landmark, the Chemistry Renew project

incorporated sustainable practices that saved \$15.9 million in costs, diverted 323 tons of solid waste from landfills, and prevented 1,155 tons of carbon emissions from being released into the atmosphere, compared to constructing a new comparable replacement building.

For more information on UBC Renew, visit www.lbs.ubc.ca/renew.



Chemistry Building renovation retains history.

happy with the outcome. "I think it'll take a very good eye to recognize any differences," he says.

Indeed, the big differences aren't architectural, but academic, as patrons want to access and use information in vastly different ways than the users of 1925. The Chapman Learning Commons is wirelessly enabled, and features 40 computer workstations. There are also four multimedia workstations that students can book to work on digital projects such as video editing or website development.

"It's an evolution from

spaces where people come to find information," says Simon Neame, coordinator of programs and services for the Learning Centre. "Now, they come to use information in order to create knowledge." As he notes, students are now submitting classwork in all sorts of formats – not just the obligatory essay.

Neame describes the 5,000-square-foot Chapman Learning Commons as a "hub of learning support" that offers services such as research and writing assistance, workshops and more. "It's a one-stop shop for getting help and referral," he says.

Academic peer assistants, hired

by UBC Library and Student Development, staff the Learning Commons help desk to assist with inquiries and offer tours.

Collaboration has also inspired other projects. For the past three years, Student Development, the Office of Learning Technology, the Alma Mater Society and others have worked on the LEAP portal (<http://leap.ubc.ca>), which Neame describes as a virtual learning commons. "As we develop our online services, it makes sense to integrate those into LEAP," he notes.

Sauder students market sustainability to the Facebook generation

BY BASIL WAUGH

Facebook can help you stay in touch with friends, but can it help you reduce energy consumption?

That's the thrust of a UBC marketing project that has caught the attention of B.C. Hydro.

"We found that many students lack pretty basic awareness around saving electricity," says Aisha Tejani, who recently placed second in a BC Hydro Power Smart Innovation Challenge along with fellow UBC students Sara Fan, Cici Gu, Christine Lin. "And social networking websites can play a role in filling that gap."

Tejani and her teammates' winning submission – which came with a \$3,000 prize – started as a Sauder School of Business applied marketing project in one of more than 300 courses at UBC with sustainability-related content.

Their assignment? To pitch BC Hydro on a marketing plan that uses new technologies and other innovative practices to help universities and colleges reduce energy consumption. The B.C. government has mandated the province to be energy self-sufficient by 2016, so crown corporations are jumping on the conservation bandwagon.

To collect data, the group surveyed nearly 100 students on their conservation awareness and online habits through focus groups and random surveys. The results were surprising, says Tejani, who moonlights as a hip-hop deejay.

Although UBC has been consistently recognized as a leader in campus sustainability – it is the first and only Canadian university to win the World Wildlife Foundation's Green

Campus award – the team found that energy conservation knowledge was relatively low among undergrads.

"Students know about switching off lights, computers and monitors, but it really drops off after that," said Tejani, who received advice from the staff at UBC's Sustainability Office before creating the focus groups.

According to their research, 70 per cent of students are unaware that leaving an appliance such as an unused cell phone charger plugged into a wall consumes energy. Sixty per cent were unaware of the benefits of energy-efficient compact fluorescent lightbulbs (CFLs).

"The students we spoke to were hungry for more

information, but said they had a limited time and attention to absorb messages," she said.

After crunching the data, the team recommended that B.C. Hydro develop an application that posts "daily conservation tips" on Facebook and UBC's Web Course Tools (WebCT) website, where students download assignments and other class content. They recommended selling CFLs and other energy-efficient household items in booths in UBC's Student Union Building.

"Students said they visit Facebook and WebCT everyday, so they present a great opportunity to get sustainability messages out to students," she says.


BC Hydro agreed. "All the teams developed innovative ideas that contribute to our goal of making B.C. a world leader in energy conservation," said Gail McBride, BC Hydro's Manager of Conservation Innovation. "The solutions proposed can help build and support the momentum we need to change behaviours and help customers take responsibility for their energy use."

The provincial energy provider also liked the team's proposed residence energy-conservation contest, in which UBC's 8,000 students in campus housing compete to see who can most reduce their room's energy consumption. "They thought it was a great way to form good

habits early, like turning off power bars and using CFLs," says Tejani.

Tejani, who graduates this May, calls the project one of the highlights of her education. "It was just a great project; I learned a lot," she says. "The research, the marketing plan, the presentation to BC Hydro – it was all great experience."

"Most importantly, it really improved my awareness on energy issues and got me excited about sustainability," adds Tejani, who for another class project is working to reduce energy consumption in Henry Angus, home of UBC's Sauder School of Business.

For more information, visit www.sustain.ubc.ca. 



Aisha Tejani, left, Christine Lin: students are hungry for more information.

PHOTO: MARTIN DEE

TRIUMF founder influenced a generation of researchers

BY CATHERINE LOIACONO

Next month, students and faculty will have an opportunity to celebrate Prof. Emeritus of Physics Erich Vogt's lifetime of achievement at UBC. At the same time, they will be supporting a special scholarship fund established by the Department of Physics and Astronomy.

"For only one dollar per year, Erich taught first year UBC physics students for close to a quarter of a century," said Jeff Young, Head of UBC's Department of Physics and Astronomy. "Not only has this been a great deal for the university, it has helped influence a generation of research and innovation across the country

and around the world."

Vogt joined UBC in 1965. Today, he is regarded as one of the most distinguished Canadian Nuclear physicist of his generation. In 1976 he founded TRIUMF – Canada's National Laboratory for Particle and Nuclear Physics. Today, it is internationally recognized for excellence in sub-atomic physics.

When thinking of Vogt, TRIUMF's current Director Nigel Lockyer referenced Newton, "If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants." "Erich is one of those giants. He embodies that rare combination of leadership, intellect and complete selflessness."

On May 4, Vogt will be honoured with a day of celebration at UBC's Hebb Theatre. The event will also support summer research internships for first year undergraduate Physics students.

Vogt has received numerous research and teaching awards, including the Order of British Columbia, the Order of Canada and the Medal of Achievement from the Canadian Association of Physicists. He has served with Atomic Energy Canada and orchestrated the construction of the first PET imaging instrument in association with UBC's Physics Prof. Emeritus Brian Pate.


For more information visit <http://vogt.physics.ubc.ca>. 



PHOTO: COURTESY ERICH VOGT

Erich Vogt: "rare combination of leadership and intellect."

UBC Psychiatry Prof. to help lead mental health collaboration for Vancouver's Downtown Eastside

BY CATHERINE LOIACONO

"If you are not investing in innovative strategies, you are not moving forward in solving the pressing issues of today," says Dr. Michael Krausz, UBC Prof. of Psychiatry and a Clinician at St. Paul's Hospital. Krausz brings his international expertise in concurrent disorders – the dual diagnosis of mental illness and drug addiction – to address the mental health crisis in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. Krausz believes in a holistic approach to treating concurrent disorders as well as a collaborative effort between health authorities, universities and government.

Originally from Germany, Krausz arrived in Vancouver close to a year ago to accept the position as Leading Edge Endowment Fund Chair in Addictions Research at UBC. Krausz has recently developed a proposal for the Government of British Columbia to create a new Centre of Excellence for Addiction and Concurrent Disorders at UBC.

Later this month, Krausz will participate with Canada's Mental Health Commissioner Senator Michael Kirby at a special addictions and mental health conference in Vancouver which will focus on concurrent disorders.

Krausz will also Co-Chair Collaboration for Change – a new initiative led by the City of Vancouver that brings together community and government leaders to help improve mental



Michael Krausz: concurrent disorders require holistic approach.

at the University of Hamburg. Krausz was instrumental in the implementation of the German Methadone Program and the European Cocaine Project. It was through this work that he started to make the connection between concurrent disorders. He also found that improved treatment led to crime reduction.

He was drawn to UBC when the problems of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside were brought to his attention with the implementation of the North American Opiate Medication Initiative – a clinical trial that tests whether heroin-assisted therapy or methadone therapy is better for improving the health and quality of life of long-time opiate users. Vancouver and Montreal are the study sites chosen because they have the largest heroin-addicted populations in Canada.

He views Vancouver as an open-minded city that is looking for innovative strategies which go beyond the NAOMI trial and the In-Site program – North America's first legal safe injection site.

Krausz believes that Vancouver has two years to show the world that it can be a laboratory of solutions and innovative drug treatments. "Our success will be measured by the availability of a broad range of treatments and the number of affected individuals who have access to these treatments," says Krausz. "Addressing these social issues could be the real legacy of the 2010 games."

blown up – by either the largest or the smallest of the world's weapons. In such a framework, global governance will have the means to protect human rights, viewing human security from the perspective of the individual instead of the state.

"I can imagine a world where the rule of principle has more sway, in which peace means much more than just stable nuclear deterrence."

Vancouver's current situation reminds Krausz of the open drug scenes that existed in Europe in the 1980s and 1990s. He believes Vancouver's situation poses a greater challenge in that homelessness is compounded with substance abuse and mental illness.

"What you see is that a high percentage of individuals are mentally ill and have no place to live," says Krausz. "This has also led to higher mortality rates. In this population, persons are dying two decades earlier due to suicide, overdoses and HIV/AIDS."

still live in a world where, "the strong do what they may and the weak do what they must." But leavening his realism is a stronger faith, he says, that an emerging "pan-human ethical standard" is taking form, where nations will gradually evolve away from the rule of power toward the rule of principle.

Huntley says he envisions a day when children will be able to grow up without fear of being

"What you see is that a high percentage of individuals are mentally ill and have no place to live."

health services in the Downtown Eastside. This collaboration will also consider opportunities associated with the \$110 million allocated by the Government of Canada for special mental health and homelessness projects across Canada.

Widely recognized as a world authority on addiction treatment, Krausz has dedicated his professional life to treating substance abuse and mental illness. At the age of 19, he began training as a pediatric psychiatric nurse. By the mid 1990s he was leading one of the world's largest addiction trials

HUNTLEY *continued from page 1*

The proximity of deadly weapons, along with the "Star Wars" defense plans of then U.S. President Ronald Reagan, spurred Huntley to begin reading up on the nuclear threat – at a time, he observes wryly, when most of his friends "were more focused on getting dates with girls or playing baseball."

Huntley worries that we

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Seniors on the internet: UBC Okanagan students offer in-home training.

Walk on the wired side could end isolation for seniors

BY BUD MORTENSON

Connecting to the World Wide Web could ease the isolation felt by many seniors who lack meaningful social interaction in their lives. And for those needing a little help getting online, UBC Okanagan students are showing the way.

"Isolation is one of the top issues for seniors," says Mary Ann Murphy, who holds a cross-appointment on aging as Assoc. Prof. of Sociology and Social Work at UBC Okanagan. "We hope connecting isolated seniors to a 'virtual' or real community of friends or family will have the effect of helping the person to stay attached to the world via, for example, enhanced communication or relationship building."

Social isolation may contribute to depression, grief, stress, anxiety, alcohol and medication misuse, a failure to seek help when it's needed, and an extremely high elder suicide rate -- particularly among older men, Murphy says.

In a pilot project this spring, Murphy and students from her Sociology 480: Aging, Diversity and Inequality class are working with the UBC Okanagan Learning Exchange and Kelowna's Seniors Outreach Services Society to provide in-home basic computer training to a small group of homebound seniors in the region.

During five one-on-one visits by students with laptops, seniors are getting to know the personal computer and specific Internet applications. After just two visits, Kelowna senior Catherine Palmer says she is ready to learn a lot more about computers and hopes to connect online with friends in Ontario and other parts of the country.

"I have no family, except my son," says Palmer, who moved from Toronto nearly two decades ago, retired in 1997, and no longer drives. "Keeping in touch

with friends is really important, especially when you don't have family around. You learn that as you get older."

Because she is able to walk to her local bus stop, Palmer says, she is not as isolated as some seniors. "But winter is very isolating -- even walking to the bus in winter is a scary situation," she says. "It would be nice to have contact with people when I can't go out -- if I can learn to get on the Internet."

The visits are giving seniors new tech skills, while students are learning about sharing their time and knowledge "and a little patience," points out student Haley Oliver.

"How do you teach someone to use a mouse?" says Oliver. "It feels innate to me, but it's an entirely new skill for a senior using a mouse for the first time. Showing someone who has never used a computer how to use one has given me a little bit more patience."

The project is a powerful community service learning opportunity for students, and it's helping a local agency re-engage isolated seniors in community life, says Phil Bond, manager of the UBC Okanagan Learning Exchange.

"Students are also researching emerging trends in technology used to combat seniors' isolation -- social networks, for example," he says. "As well, they're identifying available funding opportunities, donor, rental or lease options for laptop and desktop computers for seniors."

Student Tiffany Pang is involved in this research. "Most of my prior experience with seniors was in nursing homes and with my grandparents, who are very active," Pang says. "I think the project is a great way to help alleviate seniors' isolation because not only will it allow seniors to keep in touch with their families and friends, it will provide them with the opportunity to expand their

social networks even if they're unable to leave their homes."

The Learning Exchange will host a public discussion once the student visits are complete this spring. "We'll reflect on what surprised us, where we grew, and what assumptions and beliefs have been challenged," says Bond.


"I hope the experience of the students blasts a pre-conceived myth that seniors are afraid to use computers," says Professor Murphy. "The research tells us that computer literacy has more to do with exposure than age. And we hope to have the students observe some of the issues in adapting this technology to this population."

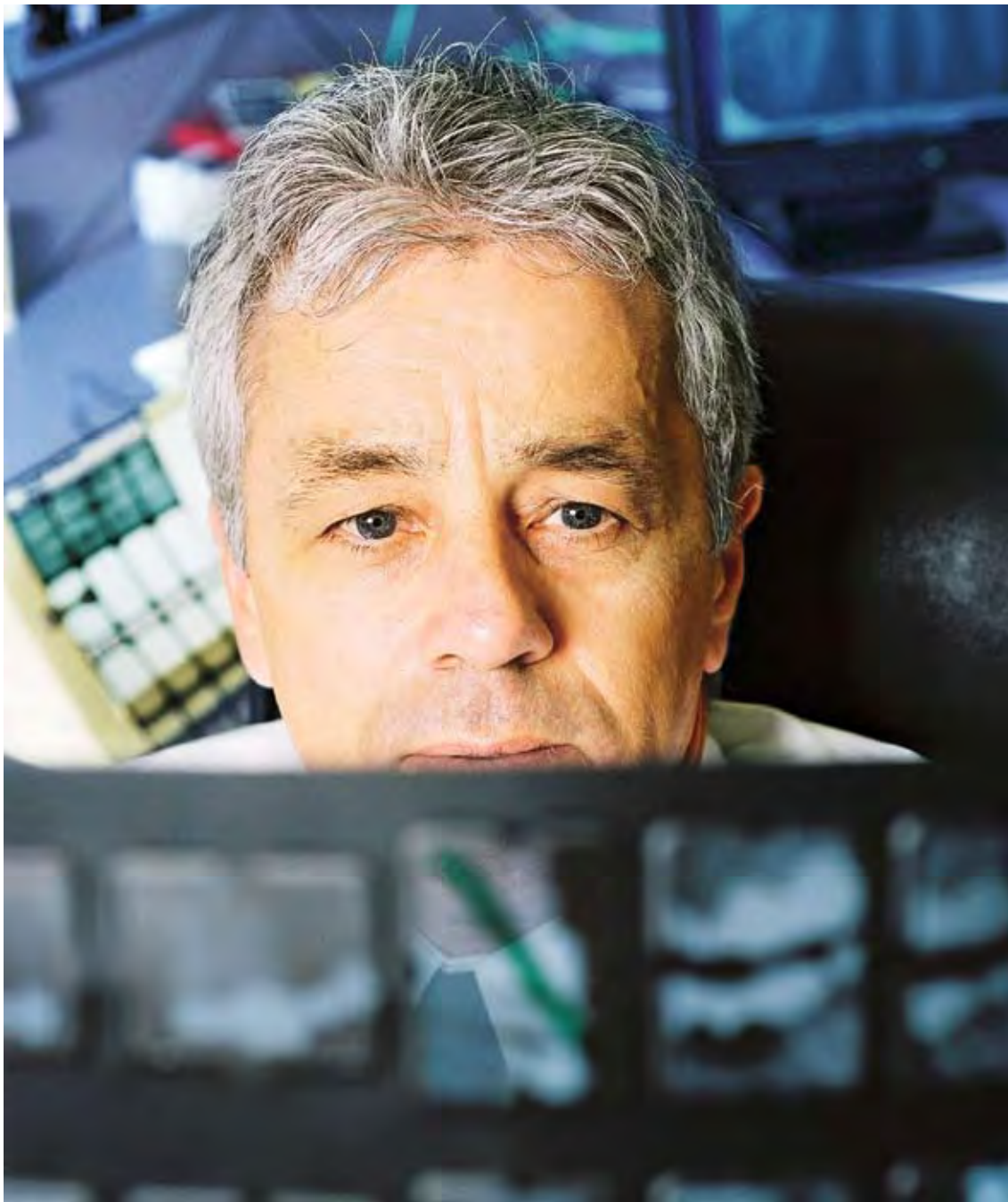
The Okanagan has one of Canada's oldest populations, says Murphy, citing the large number of retirees moving to the region.

"One future challenge is meeting the needs of those in-migrants who come here leaving a physical challenge that restricts their ability to get out as often as they would desire," she says.

"A lot of senior couples move here to retire together," says Vi Sorenson, Executive Director of Seniors Outreach. "If one of them develops a major health problem or passes away, the retirement they thought they'd have together just doesn't happen that way."

Sorenson says some simple things -- such as being able to see online photo albums from far-away family members -- can make a real difference in the lives of isolated seniors.

"They get to see the kids growing up, and something like that really connects them to their families," she says. "We see this as a way to help more homebound people -- it gives them a window to the world. It's endless what it could bring to their lives." 



David Sweet owes his forensic dentistry career to organ donors.

PHOTO: MARTIN DEE

Forensic expert gets two extra chances at life – now that’s Sweet

BY ERIN CREAK

It was news around the globe when Robert William Pickton was found guilty on six counts of second-degree murder on Dec 9, 2007.

Many people were aware that UBC forensic odontologist David Sweet played a key role in identifying the victims. But what few realize is that Sweet had the energy, capacity and desire to participate in the largest serial killer investigation in Canadian history thanks to the exceptional generosity of two individuals.

Sweet is internationally renowned for his innovative forensic dentistry techniques. Over the course of his career, he developed a computer program to examine the biting edges of teeth; a method to retrieve saliva from skin without contamination from the skin’s DNA (known as “Sweet Swabbing”), and a technique to extract DNA from teeth and bones. The international forensic community has accepted his methods as the benchmark for their jurisdictions.

Yet, for all these accomplishments, Sweet has also had to spend most of his life being fastidiously attentive to diet, exercise and medication. Diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes

at the age of 10, he was warned that he could lose his kidneys and his eyesight if he was not careful. For Sweet, a missed meal or too little sleep always held the potential for disaster.

A career as a world-leading forensic expert while simultaneously micromanaging his health eventually took its toll. “When renal complications set in 9 years ago, I was put on the kidney-pancreas transplant list,” Sweet recalls. “After a period of waiting, I received a phone call from the B.C. Transplant Society one Sunday in 2001. An operation and 13 hours later I was no longer a diabetic.”

It was shortly after his transplant that Sweet and his lab -- the UBC Bureau of Legal Dentistry (BOLD) in the Faculty of Dentistry -- became involved with the Robert Pickton case. “After the transplant, I felt I could do anything. I was up before the alarm every morning. Truly, it was a rebirth.”

Sweet’s lab processed more than 550 items related to the Pickton case. BOLD used his process of pulverizing tooth and bones to powder to extract DNA. Asked by Crown Prosecutor Mike Petrie on the opening day of the trial if it was partly due to Sweet’s work that the six victims in the case could

be identified, Sweet replied: “Yes.”

When Sweet’s first transplanted kidney failed in 2003 and had to be removed, an old friend from dental school days didn’t hesitate to give Sweet one of his own kidneys. Not long after this second transplant the 2004 tsunami devastated Southeast Asia. “From early January 2005 after the tsunami, I worked 239 days in a row on the disaster victim identification response for Canada,” says Sweet.

Sweet has also since been appointed chief scientist with the Interpol Disaster Victim Identification Standing Committee, which responds to disasters such as earthquakes and plane crashes.

“These unbelievable gifts have affected me very deeply,” Sweet says, “and have given me much more than just a healthy body. I am stronger and healthier than I have ever been. My accomplishments would not have been possible without the generosity of my donors.”

April 22-28 is National Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week. Potential donors can register online at: www.transplant.bc.ca/onlinereg/bcts.asp **R**



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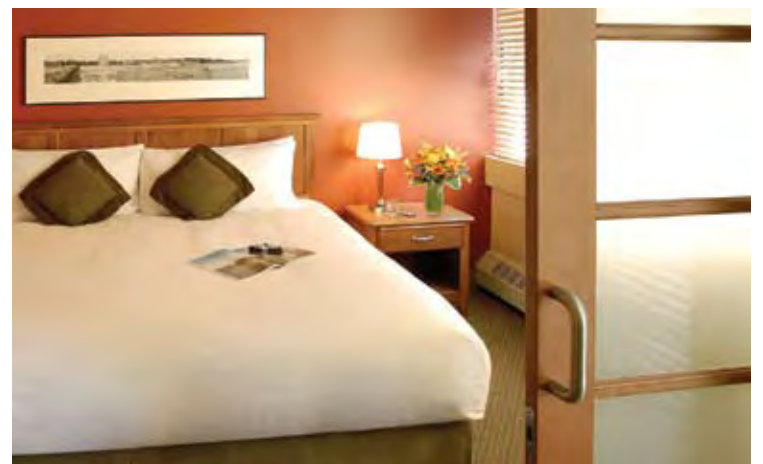
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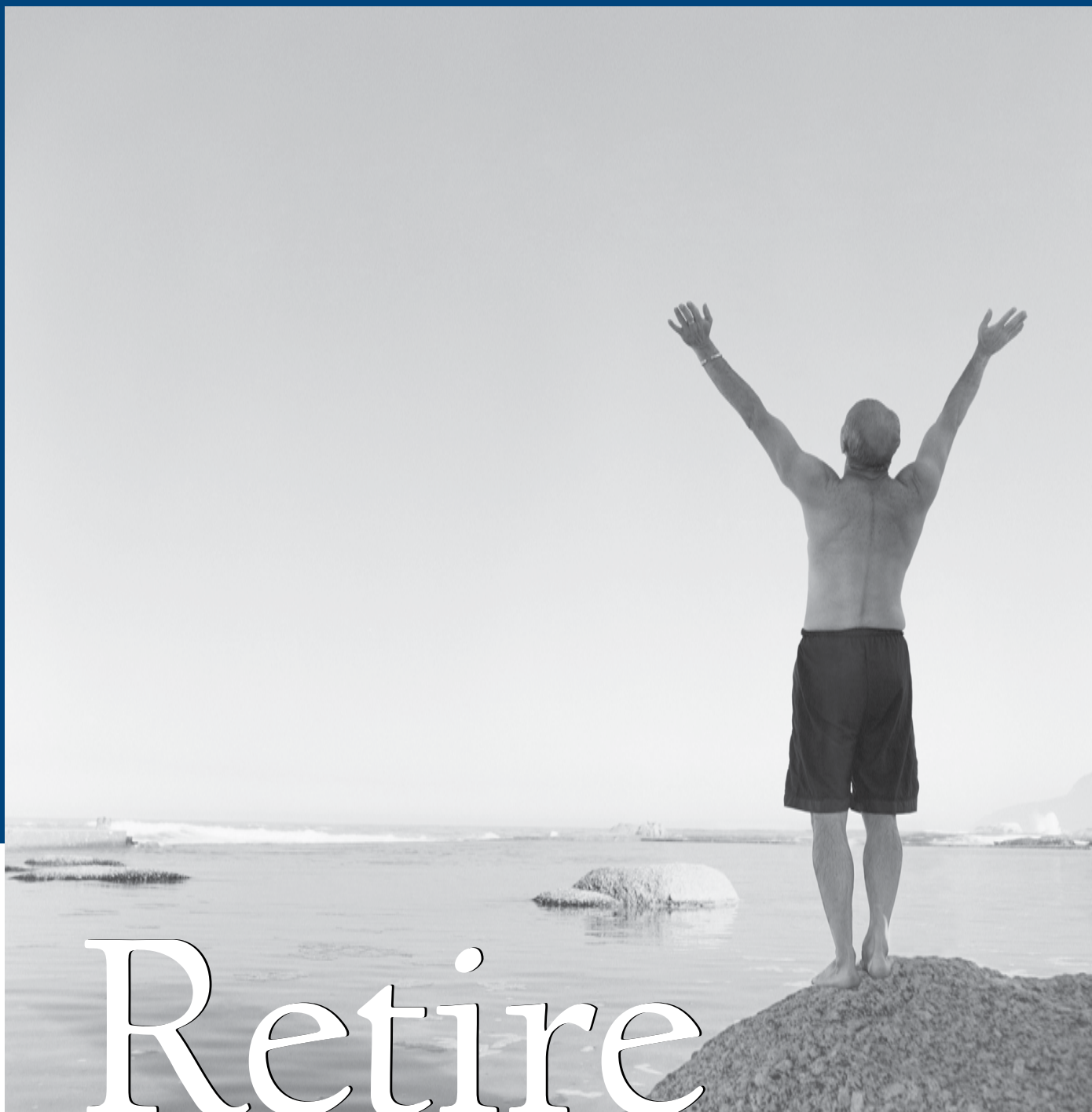
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