GRADUATES OF THE KEYBOARD CAMPUS

I first met Paul Levinson in 2006 at an academic conference at New York's Fordham University, where he was then teaching. Except I felt like I already knew him, Paul having been my master's thesis adviser a decade earlier. Online experience can create paradoxes like that.

Paul, a pioneer of online education, was the founder of Connect Ed, which offered graduate courses in new media studies through the New School for Social Research. In 1994, I started taking courses there. After a year, Paul guided me through the thesis process and, in 1996, I graduated with a degree achieved entirely online. I was then living in Toronto and never set foot on the New York campus. Courses were conducted via discussion boards: The professors would post lectures and students would post responses, initially to the lectures, then to each other. Some readings were available online, others we had to find in local libraries or bookstores.

There are many obvious reasons for choosing online education. First, the cost of an American institution was already high; having to live in New York would have made it prohibitively expensive. Secondly, some of the students I met had full-time jobs and couldn't make in-person classes. Since it wasn't necessary to be in a classroom during a scheduled lecture, online classes allowed them to access notes and discussions at their convenience. Thirdly, one of the brightest students in my classes had multiple disabilities and it would have been physically impossible for her to attend a traditional class.

There are other advantages to online education. One is the inversion of the roles of student and teacher. This occurs because of the difference between attendance and participation. In in-person learning, you can be physically present in a classroom but contribute nothing to the ongoing discussion. In an online class, if you're not contributing to the ongoing discussion, it's like you're not there; unlike traditional classrooms, attendance and participation are the same. Moreover, in a typical in-person class, most of the communications come from the teacher. Because students have to participate, online classes reverse the trend, with student posts making up most of the class communications.

This type of learning is not for everyone though. It requires students who are active in building their own knowledge base and it also changes the role of the teacher, from the "sage on the stage" imparting wisdom to students to someone who sets out the parameters of a course and then guides students to finding their own way of assembling and understanding course materials.

In short, how one experiences online education depends on how creative the professor and the students are willing to be with the medium.

Adapted from ***The Globe and Mail***
October 2012
(451 words)

Anglais - Texte 42

GRAPHIC ANTI-SMOKING ADS WORK

The federal government says its graphic ad campaign showing diseased smokers has been such a success that it is planning another round next year to nudge more Americans to kick the habit. The ads, which ran for 12 weeks in spring and early summer, aimed to get 500,000 people to try to quit and 50,000 to kick the habit long-term.

"The initial results suggest the impact will be even greater than that," says Thomas Frieden, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which spearheaded the $54 million campaign. The ads showed real Americans talking about how smoking caused their paralysis, lung removal and amputations.

He says it's the first time the U.S. government has paid for anti-smoking ads, although some media ran them free.

The CDC doesn't have a tally yet on how many people actually tried to quit, but it says the ads generated 192,000 extra calls – more than double the usual volume – to its national toll-free quit line, 800-QUIT-NOW, and 417,000 new visitors to smokefree.gov, its website offering cessation tips. That's triple the site's previous traffic.

"We do plan to do another campaign next year," Frieden says, adding that he has no details yet on the ads or their timing. He says the amount the CDC spent this year is a pittance compared with the $10 billion the tobacco industry spends annually to market its products.
The nation's two largest tobacco companies, Philip Morris USA and R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company, declined to comment on the ads. Frieden says the print, broadcast and online ads struck a chord. "What we heard from people is they wished they'd seen them years ago."
"We made the danger accessible and realistic," says Eric Asche, who works for the anti-smoking group Legacy and who consulted with the CDC on the ads. "When you personalize a story, it's powerful."

Too powerful for some. The ads are shocking, disgusting and too provocative. The non-smoking majority is being subjected to an assault on our senses.

Glenn Leshner, a University of Missouri researcher who has studied the effectiveness of anti-smoking ads in a lab setting, says they draw more attention when they feature either a health threat or disgusting images. Yet when they have both, he's found viewers start to withdraw. Frieden, a physician who has treated many smokers, defends the ads.

"It's important that everyone understands the impact of smoking," he says. He adds that most people don't realize that smoking causes more than lung cancer and heart disease.

Health care costs are $2,000 more each year for smokers – about 20% of U.S. adults – than for non-smokers, Frieden says, and smoking remains the leading cause of preventable deaths.

Adapted from ***USA Today***
August 2012
(449 words)

GUNS IN OKLAHOMA

A new law took effect last November in Oklahoma – a state with 142,000 men and women licensed to carry concealed weapons. The law says that anyone licensed to carry a concealed firearm can now choose to carry a weapon out in the open, in a belt or shoulder holster, loaded or unloaded. Five minutes after midnight Thursday, Brian Hull and his friends – supporters of the Oklahoma Open Carry Association, a gun rights group – will mark the occasion by wearing their unconcealed handguns while dining at Beverly's Pancake House, a 24-hour restaurant. "It's just a peaceful assembly," said Mr. Hull. "We're all licensed by the state to carry. We've all been trained and vetted. Why wouldn't somebody want to have that kind of a group do business with them in their establishment?"

Advocates for gun rights said the ability to "open carry" would deter crime and eliminate the risks of wardrobe issues, such as when someone carrying a concealed weapon breaks the law by accidentally exposing the firearm. But the new law is a symbolic as well as practical victory. Supporters said there was no better advertisement for the Second Amendment than to have thousands of responsible adults openly carrying their weapons in a highly visible fashion.

Oklahoma has thus become the 15th state to allow people to openly carry firearms with a license. Though common around the country, these laws in several states have posed legal and logistical problems for municipalities and law enforcement agencies seeking to balance gun owners' constitutional rights with maintaining order.

Oklahoma is considered a "shall-issue" state, meaning that once a resident meets the legal requirements, officials must issue a license. Other states, including New Jersey and Connecticut, are known as "may-issue" states, meaning that even if a resident satisfies the requirements, officials may or may not issue the license because they have the discretion to consider other factors.

The new law has also brought about a subtle change in buying habits. Customers with small handguns that are easy to conceal have been buying larger weapons, with longer barrels that hold additional rounds, as they prepare to wear their guns unconcealed.

The law prohibits concealed or unconcealed firearms in a handful of places, including government buildings, schools and bars. Most businesses, however, must decide on their own how to handle those openly carrying. People entering one of Bank of Oklahoma's 85 branches in the state need not leave their weapon in the car. They can bring it inside. The old saying within the community is, "It's better to have it and not need it than need it and not have it."

Adapted from ***The New York Times***
November 2012
(438 words)

HE'S WATCHING THAT, IN PUBLIC? PORNOGRAPHY TAKES NEXT SEAT

On a recent morning at the main public library here, dozens of people sat and stood at computers, searching job-hunting sites, playing games, watching music videos. And some looked at pictures of naked men and women in full view of passers-by.

It is an issue playing out not just at libraries, but in cafes and gyms, on airplanes, trains and highways, and just about any other place where the explosion of computers, tablets and smartphones has given rise to a growing source of dispute: public displays of mature content.

An antipornography group, Morality in Media, has in recent months launched a "no porn on the plane" campaign, and has contacted most major airlines to argue that they should commit to policing what people watch.

For its part, Delta Air Lines says that it does not allow people to view "offensive content of any kind," but also said that flight attendants are trained to make case-by-case assessments depending on circumstances and concerns of other passengers. The Association of Flight Attendants said that its members want to avoid offending passengers or playing the role of censors.

One reason the issue is so thorny is that not everyone agrees on what might be considered offensive. That is the case even within Morality in Media, where they said people should also be careful with public viewings of violent content.

But the group's president, a former Justice Department official in charge of prosecuting child and adult pornography said, "It's not the same situation with violence," noting that graphic war scenes from a movie like "Saving Private Ryan" can provide a powerful history lesson.

Some people develop their own sliding scales for what is acceptable. A growing number of cafes and restaurants offer free Wi-Fi. There have been a few reports of men being arrested over the last year for viewing pornography on their computers at McDonald's. Starbucks said it does not censor what people use its Wi-Fi for but reserves the right to ask someone not to view material that might offend patrons or employees.

Some people choose to act as their own censor. Lewis Goldberg, a lawyer in New York, occasionally watches shows like "Mad Men" or "Game of Thrones" on his iPad when he works out at the gym. But he fast-forwards through sexual or particularly violent scenes. "I'm bringing my media into a public space, and it's part of my responsibility in a civil society."

Others fiercely defend the rights of people to watch whatever they want in public. People say, 'Just look away'. Their argument is that people can do what they want. This is America.

Adapted from ***The New York Times***
July 2012
(446 words)

HEALTH PANEL APPROVES RESTRICTION ON SALE OF LARGE SUGARY DRINKS

Seeking to reduce runaway obesity rates, the New York City Board of Health on Thursday approved a ban on the sale of large sodas and other sugary drinks at restaurants, street carts and movie theaters, the first restriction of its kind in the country.

The measure, championed by Mayor Bloomberg, is certain to intensify a growing national debate about soft drinks and obesity, and it could spur other cities to follow suit.

The measure, which bars the sale of many sweetened drinks in containers larger than 16 ounces, is to take effect on March 12, unless it is blocked by a judge. The vote by the Board of Health was the only regulatory approval needed to make the ban binding in the city, but the American soft-drink industry has campaigned strongly against the measure and vowed this week to fight it through other means, possibly in the courts.

"This is not the end," Eliot Hoff, a spokesman for New-Yorkers for Beverage Choices, a group financed by the soft-drink industry, which opposes the restrictions, said in an e-mail moments after the vote. "By imposing this ban, the board has shown no regard for public opinion or the consequences to businesses in the city," Mr. Hoff wrote, noting a recent poll that showed 60 percent of New Yorkers believed the plan was a bad idea.

Mr. Bloomberg is known for introducing ambitious – and, some say, overreaching – public health policies, like bans on smoking in bars and city parks and the posting of calorie counts on menus in chain restaurants; they often catch on around the country.

Curbing obesity has been the latest goal of the mayor, who has been concerned about high rates of diabetes and weight-related health issues. More than half of adult New-Yorkers are obese or overweight.

Dr. Gowda, a professor of medicine at Columbia University and a member of the Board of Health, said he recognized that the public had concerns about the plan. But, he said, he had seen firsthand the deadly effect of obesity on patients he has treated in the city.

"The same way that we've become acclimatized and normalized to sodas, we've started to become acclimatized to the prevalence of obesity in our society. The reality is, we are in a crisis, and I think we have to act on this."

The restrictions would not affect fruit juices, dairy-based drinks like milkshakes, or alcoholic beverages; no-calorie diet sodas would not be affected, but establishments with self-service drink fountains, like many fast-food restaurants, would not be allowed to stock cups larger than 16 ounces.

Adapted from ***The New York Times***
September 2012
(442 words)

I MUST PERSUADE MY COMMUNITY TO PROTECT OUR AMAZON HOME

The oil company PetroAmazonas is promising my Amazonian Kichwa community a new school, college, eco-lodge, grant funding for their children to go to university, money for healthcare, dentistry, jobs and a cash lump sum, in return for being able to develop their land. But with my wife and 14-month-old baby, I've embarked on the task of persuading the community otherwise – in order to preserve intact the 70,000 hectares of virgin rainforest here, its inhabitants, medicinal plants, flora and fauna.

A vote by my people is imminent. We are going to go through the rainforest, house to house, to talk to the people to help them choose tourism and rainforest preservation over the offer from the oil firm.

We have protected these lands with our hearts, soul and lives since before we can remember. In 2009, when I was president of the community, the entire community got together and wrote and signed a document that we hand-delivered to the oil company, saying that we would never give up Sani Isla lands for oil exploitation. This holds firm in indigenous law but they are here now, saying that a change to the Ecuadorian constitution has rendered the document we wrote worthless. We have since found out that this is not true.

My life changed in 2008 when I met my wife, the woman I had seen in a vision when I was 15. We married in 2010, not an easy path to take for either of us – I am an indigenous Amazonian shaman and community leader from Ecuador whose role is to honour, protect, serve, advise and heal the people, emotionally, physically and spiritually. She, a caring, outgoing entrepreneur from London with an interesting energy and a deep passion to help. We built a lodge on the edge of a beautiful lagoon to bring in tourism, and it does. But financially it has struggled; and we are hoping to attract more tourists from the UK and elsewhere.

The oil companies have made great in-roads this time, they have found our people low emotionally and financially, and have seized their chance. How can we help the community give up such wonderful opportunities?

We are going to meet with the main community leaders to try to offer alternatives to what seems to be too tempting an offer from the oil companies – we want to help them choose self-sustainability and tourism and protecting the forest instead. Then by canoe, my wife and I, along with our baby, will go house to house to explain the pros and cons, so that when the vote comes soon, they feel able to vote "no" with confidence and not "yes" out of desperation and lack of hope.

Adapted from ***guardian.co.uk***,
October 2012
(458 words)

IN FRANCE, A STAR RISES FROM AN OFT-NEGLECTED PLACE

Frenchman Jean Dujardin may have won the Academy Award for best actor for his role in *The Artist*, but in France he was beat out for the country's most prestigious acting award, the Cesar, by a new acting sensation: The 34-year-old son of African immigrants, Omar Sy.

Sy's movie, *The Intouchables*, was a hit across Europe and is now playing in theaters in the U.S. It's a feel-good buddy comedy about a quadriplegic white aristocrat who hires an unemployed black kid from the projects as his personal aide. Despite the differences in age, race and background, the two form a deep bond. The film confronts racism, poverty and infirmity, while Sy illuminates the screen with his rapid-fire banter and infectious laugh.

Sy says he thinks the film struck a chord "because it's about two different Frances meeting each other, liking each other and forming a powerful relationship. That's the problem in France today. There are worlds living side by side yet completely apart. People don't know or understand their neighbor. That's why people are scared."

Like the character he plays, Sy hails from a France far from the glittering boulevards of Paris. The fourth of eight children, he grew up in one of the gritty suburbs with high immigrant populations, that ring the French capital. Sy's Senegalese father worked in a factory; his Mauritanean mother was a cleaning woman.

Immigration has loomed large on the French political landscape lately. Even many second-generation immigrants said they felt stigmatized by the toxic, anti-foreigner, anti-Muslim rhetoric of the recent French presidential race. Sy, who's Muslim himself, says his background has been an asset.

"I feel completely French," he says, "but it's true that as the son of immigrants I struggled with my identity, especially in my teenage years. But I've been able to take aspects of both French and African culture and I'm all the richer for it, even if it does mean I have a little more baggage than most people."

The Intouchables has launched Sy into real stardom. It became France's second-highest grossing film of all time. A third of the French population has seen it.

The Intouchables also swept Europe, spending nine weeks as the No. 1 film in Germany. But some American critics have had harsh words for it, saying it deals in clichés and smacks of Uncle Tom racism.

Sy has since left the projects — though he says he will always carry them within. Those who know him say he goes back often, and he doesn't forget anyone. Watching him leave the TV studios, it's not hard to believe: Sy seems to have a kind word and a warm smile for everyone, especially the security guards and the cleaning woman.

Adapted from ***npr.com***
June 2012
(461 words)

Anglais - Texte 48

IN SWEDEN, SMOKERS HAVE ANOTHER OPTION, SNUS

I tried to quit smoking this month. I lasted a decidedly unimpressive five days. I have tried all the remedies – patches, gums and going cold turkey – but none of them worked. Meeting friends for a patch and a pint down the pub or joining a colleague for a stick of nicotine gum after work just doesn't have the same social appeal as smoking.

In Sweden, ex-smokers have another option: Snus, small bags of moist tobacco that are placed under your top lip. Consumed in Scandinavia since the mid-19th century, the popularity of Snus rose significantly from the 1970s onwards, as people became increasingly aware of the dangers of smoking. The proportion of male smokers fell dramatically from 40% in 1976 to just 15% in 2002. Almost a third of ex-smokers used Snus when quitting, and those who did were about 50% more likely to succeed.

There are plenty of indicators that the switch from cigarettes to Snus in Sweden has resulted in substantial health benefits. Sweden now has the lowest rate of tobacco-related diseases in Europe and the world's lowest rate of lung cancer in males. While using Snus is still highly addictive, it is widely held to be between 95% and 99% less harmful than smoking.

One of the key factors behind Snus's success in weaning people off cigarettes is that it can fulfil some of the social functions of smoking. As Snus delivers a dose of nicotine at a similar rate to cigarettes, unlike patches or gum it still causes a distinctive nicotine rush.

Why then does the EU still ban the export of Snus to other EU countries? The answer, as documented in an insightful book by Christopher Snowdon, lies in a combination of stubbornness on the part of anti-tobacco campaigners and the vested interests of the pharmaceutical industry.

The UK was the first country to ban oral snuff in 1988 amid concerns over mouth cancer, and this was followed by an EU-wide ban on new oral tobacco products in 1992. When Sweden joined the EU in 1994, it demanded an opt-out from the ban which allowed Swedish companies to continue selling Snus within its own borders.

The health justification for the ban was subsequently weakened after numerous studies found that there was no significant correlation between Snus and mouth cancer. The way Snus is prepared significantly reduces the levels of carcinogenic nitrosamines, meaning that despite the popularity of the product Sweden has one of the lowest mouth cancer rates in the EU.

A report by the Royal College of Physicians has estimated that if Snus was allowed in Britain, the smoking rate would fall twice as fast and 25,000 lives would be saved in the space of a decade.

Adapted from ***guardian.co.uk***
October 2012
(453 words)

INDIA'S TOBACCO GIRLS

In the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, five-year-old Aliya thinks it is some kind of a game she must soon master to be a winner. From the time she wakes up and until she goes to bed, Aliya watches her mother and all the girls and women in her neighbourhood consumed in a frantic race. They all make beedis, the traditional hand-rolled Indian cigarettes. For each beedi, the roller painstakingly places tobacco inside a dried leaf, tightly rolls and secures it with a thread and then closes the tips using a sharp knife. Working between 10 and 14 hours a day, Aliya's mother and others must roll at least a 1,000 beedis each, to earn less than $2 paid by the middleman. The beedi manufacturers make billions of dollars. The rolled beedis are taken to the warehouses of large manufacturers where they are packaged and sold for a much higher price. The beedi is hugely popular and makes for nearly half of India's entire tobacco market.

The labyrinthine, congested lanes of the Kadiri slums are home to an assembly line of humans functioning like robots. Young girls and women sit out in the open, rocking back and forth, appearing entranced. Many have developed odd muscular motions as they push their work speed to the edge of human limits. "The pressure to keep up with the speed and meet the target is so intense that many skip their meals and even avoid drinking water so they do not need to go to the toilet," says Shanu, a community volunteer. Almost all beedi workers in Kadiri, like in the other beedi manufacturing areas of India, are female and a large number of them are young girls... A study released three years ago estimated that more than 1.7 million children worked in India's beedi rolling industry. Children are knowingly engaged by manufacturers who believe that their nimble fingers are more adept at rolling cigarettes.

Under Indian law, beedi rolling is defined as hazardous work. But there is a loophole which allows children, who assist their parents in their work, to be kept out of the purview of the law. Formally, it is the women who take the orders from the contractors. However, given the pressures these women face in terms of delivering, invariably children, mainly girls, get pulled into this to support their families in beedi rolling.

From unhealthy living conditions to exploitative wages, slave-like working conditions and severe health consequences - the situation of beedi workers involves violation of their fundamental rights and freedoms on many levels. A majority of the girls are pulled out of school by the time they complete primary school to support their families' incomes.

Adapted from ***BBC News***
June 2012
(440 words)

URBAN INGENUITY

Today, more than half of the world's 7 billion people live in the city, compared to only 3 per cent two centuries ago. If current trends continue, the number of city dwellers will have risen to more than 5 billion by 2030, according to the United Nations. This explosive growth not only marks one of the most significant demographic trends of the 21st century, it also raises the pressure on urban areas in every continent to provide the necessary services and amenities to make modern communities work.

In many ways, cities have stayed the same for millennia. The basic infrastructure, the markets, the security, the concentration of talent, the density of population, the institutions and government – these are exactly the same factors that have attracted people from country to city for centuries.

A walk around the ruins of Pompeii is a reminder of just how little cities have changed. The houses and courtyards, the streets and squares, the bars, bakeries and workshops reveal an urban landscape that is extraordinarily familiar to us today.

However, the economic, social and political challenges resulting from the massive growth of our cities are enormous. Energy, infrastructure, education and healthcare – the essential services without which cities can neither function nor thrive – will all be affected. Indeed, the cities that have proved most robust and most historically successful are those that have demonstrated an ability to adapt to change. Innovation will be the key to survival.

Cities are laboratories for invention, urbanisation a platform for development. Take energy, for example. Global warming and the increasing load that cities are putting on the earth's ecosystems mean that ingenious ideas must be found. So, while cities account for 70 per cent of the world's carbon emissions, they can also provide the infrastructure needed to implement and promote an extremely sustainable way of life. Their shared facilities on one hand and their insatiable needs on the other may well be what drive the solutions to global environmental concerns. Concentration of services and resource allocation reduce the carbon footprint. It might even be fair to say that urbanisation is a key driver for development: the incredible resourcefulness and creativity emanating from cities attracts investment, creates jobs and ultimately improves the quality and standard of living for residents.

But we must not lose sight of the fact that the city is also a machine for creating and sustaining relationships between people. A city's systems need to work in every sense: its transports, its pavements and parks, its civic and cultural spaces, its education and healthcare, the water and power that flow like lifeblood through its subterranean and aerial veins.... The city, though it may not often feel that way, is a machine for improving human life.

Adapted from ***the Financial Times magazine***
July 2012
(457 words)

JAILED FOR FOUR YEARS

Joshua O'Gorman and Daniel Mansell were blasted with a legally-held shotgun after they smashed their way into the isolated rural home of a businessman, Andy Ferrie, and his wife Tracey last month. The two men, who have a string of convictions between them, were arrested when they arrived at hospital seeking treatment for their injuries. Mr. and Mrs. Ferrie were also arrested and questioned for more than 40 hours on suspicion of causing grievous bodily harm. They were later released without charge. O'Gorman and Mansell were both jailed for four years after admitting burglary.

In a move welcomed by justice campaigners, Judge Michael Pert told the pair they could not expect any leniency simply because they had been wounded in the incident. He told them: "If you burgle a house in the country where the householder owns a legally-held shotgun, that is the chance you take. You cannot come to court and ask for a lighter sentence because of it." O'Gorman, 27, and Mansell, 33, both of no fixed address, had pleaded guilty to breaking into the Ferries' isolated cottage in the early hours of Sept 2.

Andrew Frymann, O'Gorman's barrister, said his client was traumatised by the experience, whereas Judge Pert said the arrest of Mr. and Mrs. Ferrie was just as severe. "Some might argue that being arrested and locked up for 40 hours is a trauma," he said. The judge's remarks were widely welcomed by those arguing that the justice system needs to be more on the side of the victim of crime rather than the perpetrator. Alan Duncan, the international development minister said: "Three cheers for the judge; he has been robust and sensible. Justice has been done and the culprits are the culprits and the victims are the victims. The police did a very good job and investigated as thoroughly as they had to when a firearm is involved."

Patrick Mercer, an MP who has campaigned for a change in the law to allow home owners more protection when defending their property, also welcomed the sentencing remark. Sir Clive Loader, added: "The penalty for burglary is not death, either by the State or by the person whose house you break into. But on the other hand, if you go into someone's home in the dead of night, wearing a balaclava in an extremely frightening way, what might follow as a result is not entirely predictable."

The debate over the right to defend property began when Tony Martin killed a burglar at his Norfolk home in 1999 and was convicted of murder and jailed for life. The sentence was reduced on appeal to manslaughter and five years' jail.

Adapted from ***The Daily Telegraph***
September 2012
(446 words)

JOY THAT LASTS, ON THE POOREST OF PLAYGROUNDS

Tim Jahnigen has always followed his heart, whether as a carpenter, a chef, a lyricist or now as an entrepreneur. So in 2006, when he saw a documentary about children in Darfur who found comfort playing soccer with balls made out of garbage and string, he was inspired to do something about it.

The children used trash because the balls donated by relief agencies quickly ripped or deflated on the rocky dirt. Kicking a ball around provided such joy in otherwise stressful and trying conditions that the children would play with practically anything that approximated a ball.

"The only thing that sustained these kids is play ; we don't understand that having a ball is like the best PlayStation 3 or a rocket to Mars," said Mr. Jahnigen. "Yet the millions of balls that are donated go flat within 24 hours."

During the next two years, Mr. Jahnigen searched for something that could be made into a ball but never wear out, go flat or need a pump. He eventually discovered PopFoam, a type of hard foam, a class of material similar to that used in Crocs, the popular and durable sandals.

Figuring out how to shape PopFoam into a sphere, though, might cost hundreds of thousands of dollars and Mr. Jahnigen's money was tied up in another business.

Then he met Sting, a friend from his days in the music business. Mr. Jahnigen told him how soccer helped the children in Darfur cope with their troubles and his efforts to find an indestructible ball. Sting urged Mr. Jahnigen to make the ball, and offered to pay for its development.

Creating a prototype turned out to be much cheaper than expected and took about a year.

To test the balls' durability, Mr. Jahnigen had them used by children and bitten by animals. In every case, the balls withstood the abuse.

Mr. Jahnigen carries samples around the world. For effect, he crushes them and even drives cars over them. All of them bounce and hold their shape. By his estimate, the ball can last for 30 years.

For each ball purchased, another is given away. The ball is being used by a hundred different organizations and has made its way to more than 140 countries.

There are challenges, though. Last year, Unicef bought 5,000 balls at $17 each and gave them to schools in Kenya and Uganda. But because the balls cannot be deflated, they are more difficult to ship. Cost is another issue. Unicef pays $2.50 for a regular football.

The costs, though, may come down as production increases.

In time, Mr. Jahnigen said, he hopes to get millions of other balls into the hands of children.

Adapted from ***The New York Times***
November 2012
(455 words)

LADY GAGA, CHARLIE SHEEN AND MOSES: CELEBRITIES AND HEROES IN AMERICAN LIFE

For most of the last century, Americans – and especially religious Americans – have been expressing concern about who is a hero in America. Religious Americans today are particularly distressed about celebrity culture and the inclination of their children to find something heroic in the antics of Lady Gaga or whoever else may be the latest focus of celebrity gossip. A number of weighty theories have developed about the meaning of America's celebrity obsession; some claim that celebrities have been deified by young people who lack a moral center and that celebrity worship has become a substitute for traditional religion. I offer three thoughts on the subject of American heroes.

First, young Americans do not worship celebrities. They do not see Lady Gaga, Lindsey Lohan and Charlie Sheen as worthy of emulation or sources of inspiration. They love celebrities and the gossip surrounding them but mostly as a source of entertainment and distraction. Of course, celebrity status is inflated today because of our media-saturated culture. Nonetheless, young people are fully aware that most celebrity lives are devoid of real purpose or value. Indeed, if young people have a problem, it is not that celebrities are their heroes; it is that they have no heroes at all.

Second, when it comes to heroes, parents have hardly set a good example. Even when they recognize authentic heroes, they seem unable to remember them and honor them in an appropriate way. The 9/11 First Responders are the most recent example. At a defining moment in our country's history, these Americans responded with great devotion, love of country, and physical courage to guarantee the safety and security of their fellow citizens. And yet, a decade later, with many suffering and dying of disease, they were brushed aside by a political establishment that had acclaimed their actions and sang their praises. It is certainly indicative of fleeting attention spans and an absence of moral seriousness.

Third, in a world devoid of heroes, religious Americans have a special responsibility to offer the young examples of heroes with whom they can identify and who inspire personal transformation. We have a ready source of such heroes in our religious texts, and especially the Bible.

Lady Gaga is bizarre and interesting, and celebrity figures are a wonderful diversion. Nonetheless, true heroes are in a different moral category. A society without heroes is a society in moral peril, and our children are hungry for role models who can give their lives purpose. Turning to our ancient texts and traditions, religious Americans need to fill the vacuum.

Adapted from ***huffingtonpost.com***
January 2012
(442 words)

Anglais - Texte 54

LET THE PARALYMPICS LEGACY BE AN END TO PREJUDICED ATTITUDES

We must continue to celebrate the success of people with disabilities in living ordinary and extraordinary lives.

The compassion, empathy, sympathy and growing understanding we all experienced during the latter part of the summer must be sustained if we are to have a legacy from the Paralympics. It will not be good enough for us to have experienced those feelings so intensely and then forget them as we go back into our autumn routines.

To hear my son explaining what cerebral palsy is and how it affects people's speech but not their understanding is part of that legacy and if it has achieved nothing else but a greater national empathy then it will have been worth it.

But actually it has to be backed up with real support – emotions and understanding are not enough. Many people with similar conditions and disabilities will be fighting a daily struggle with organisations and people's prejudices, trying to live on ever-decreasing benefits, living in a world which is built for the able-bodied and enduring the pitying or evasive looks from people when they are out and about.

Has this changed since the games? I hope so – what a legacy that would be if the government thinks again about its approach to disability benefits, if people didn't avert their eyes but smiled broadly when they saw someone without limbs or with a visible disability and if organisations made a real effort to employ disabled people.

It has not only been the Paralympics which has made me wish for people's attitudes to be changed. I visited some people recently who are the new neighbours of some young men with a learning disability who have moved into their community. Despite lots of preparatory work and bending over backwards to make life easier for all involved, the neighbours still believe that people with a learning disability somehow pose a threat to their children, make more noise than anyone else and bring down the value of their houses. In a previous authority I worked there was a similar reaction to a new independent living facility – that the residents were "schizophrenics just waiting to kill someone".

Sadly these prejudiced attitudes are within our communities and if there is a legacy to emerge from the Paralympics please let it be that we do not fear those who are different, but continue to celebrate their success in living ordinary and extraordinary lives.

So in all this talk of legacy let it be all of us who change our attitudes to disability. Perhaps some will be shown the way by the children who will never forget this summer and who will hopefully have a different attitude to disability as a result.

Adapted from ***The Guardian***
September 2012
(459 words)

LIFT-OFF FOR URBAN CABLE CAR PROJECTS AS CITIES SEEK TRANSPORT SOLUTIONS

We tend to associate cable cars with mountains, rather than urban life and work, but they are gradually taking root in our cities.

The most significant experiments were made in the 2000s by Medellin, Colombia, and Caracas, Venezuela. Cable cars, rethought as a means of mass transport, were clean, producing no carbon dioxide emissions directly, and ended the isolation of the poorest neighbourhoods. The concept has been such a success in Medellin that the city council is considering a fourth route.

France has so far lagged behind, despite being one of the first to test the idea. In 1934 Grenoble, in the French Alps, launched a cable car connecting the city centre to a hilltop fort across the river Isère. More recently several schemes have been floated but never completed. A project at Issy Les Moulineaux, near Paris, came to grief because local residents did not like the idea of riders passing over their rooftops. But several new projects are now under way and the first ones should come online in 2015.

Cable transport is cost-effective, environmentally friendly, safe and requires little infrastructure. It is particularly suitable for crossing natural obstacles such as rivers or scaling hills, there being no need for expensive engineering work. Over an equivalent distance a cable link costs half as much as a tram line, and though no rival for underground railways in terms of capacity, some models can carry up to 8,000 passengers an hour.

Brest in Brittany, will be the first to be « wired » in 2015. The local council chose this solution to cross the river Penfeld and connect the city centre to the Plateau des Capucins. The 12-hectare site used to belong to the navy and was closed to the public. Now city property, the former arsenal is being converted into an eco-neighbourhood with homes, shops, cultural amenities and business premises.

The local council originally thought of building a footbridge, but the idea was dropped, mainly because of the clearance required for naval vessels passing underneath.. The projected cable cars will carry 2,000 people an hour.

In Toulouse a cable-car service is due to open in 2017 connecting three strategic sites separated by the river Garonne and a hill: Oncopole, a cancer research centre, Rangueil hospital and Paul Sabatier University. The 2.6km route, which connects to the metro, will convey up to 7,000 passengers an hour. It will take only 10 minutes to travel from one centre to the next, whereas the same journey by car lasts almost an hour. At peak hours, cable cars will run at 90-second intervals, and five to seven minutes apart the rest of the time.

Adapted from ***The Guardian***
November 2012
(454 words)

MADE 'GIANT LEAP' AS FIRST MAN TO STEP ON MOON

Neil Armstrong, who made the "giant leap for mankind" as the first human to set foot on the moon, died on Saturday. He was 82.

A quiet, private man, at heart an engineer and crack test pilot, Mr. Armstrong made history on July 20, 1969, as the commander of the Apollo 11 spacecraft on the mission that culminated the Soviet-American space race in the 1960s. President John F. Kennedy had committed the nation "to achieving the goal, before the decade is out, of landing a man on the Moon and returning him safely to Earth." It was done with more than five months to spare.

The Apollo 11 mission capped a tumultuous and consequential decade. The '60s in America had started with such promise, with the election of a youthful president, mixed with the ever-present anxieties of the cold war. Then it touched greatness in the civil rights movement, only to implode in the years of assassinations and burning city streets and campus riots. But before it ended, human beings had reached that longtime symbol of the unreachable.

After news of Mr. Armstrong's death was reported, President Obama, in a statement from the White House, said, "Neil was among the greatest of American heroes." "And when Neil stepped foot on the surface of the moon for the first time, he delivered a moment of human achievement that will never be forgotten."

The current NASA administrator, said, "As long as there are history books, Neil Armstrong will be included in them, remembered for taking humankind's first small step on a world beyond our own." He also noted that in the years after the moonwalk, Mr. Armstrong carried himself with a grace and humility that was an example to us all.

"He remained an advocate of aviation and exploration throughout his life and never lost his boyhood wonder of these pursuits," his family said in the statement.

Almost as soon as the news of his death was announced, there was an outpouring of well wishes and fond memorials on Web sites and social media, a reflection of the extraordinary public acclaim that came to a very private man.

"As much as Neil cherished his privacy, he always appreciated the expressions of good will from people around the world and from all walks of life," his family said. "While we mourn the loss of a very good man, we also celebrate his remarkable life and hope that it serves as an example to young people around the world to work hard to make their dreams come true, to be willing to explore and push the limits, and to selflessly serve a cause greater than themselves."

Adapted from ***The New York Times***
August 2012
(452 words)

MORALS AND THE MACHINE

As robots become more autonomous, the notion of computer-controlled machines facing ethical decisions is moving out of the realm of science fiction and into the real world. Society needs to find ways to ensure that they are equipped to make moral judgements.

Robots are spreading in the civilian world from the flight deck to the operating theatre. Passenger aircraft have long been able to land themselves. Driverless trains are commonplace. And fully self-driving vehicles are being tested around the world. As they become smarter and more widespread, autonomous machines are bound to end up making life-or-death decisions in unpredictable situations, thus assuming – or at least appearing to assume moral agency.

As that happens, they will be presented with ethical dilemmas. Should a drone fire on a house where a target is known to be hiding, but which may also be sheltering civilians? Should a driveless car swerve to avoid pedestrians if that means hitting other vehicles or endangering its occupants? Should a robot involved in disaster recovery tell people the truth about what is happening if that risks causing panic? Such questions have led to the emergence of the field of "machine ethics", which aims to give machines the ability to make such choices appropriately – in other words, to tell right from wrong.

One way of dealing with these difficult questions is to avoid them altogether, by banning autonomous battlefield robots and requiring cars to have the full attention of a human driver at all times. Campaign groups such as the International Committee for Robot Arms Control have been formed in opposition to the growing use of drones. But autonomous robots could do much more good than harm. Robot soldiers would not commit rape, burn down a village in anger or become erratic decision-makers amid the stress of combat. Driverless cars are very likely to be safer than ordinary vehicles, as auto-pilots have made planes safer.

More collaboration is required between engineers, ethicists, lawyers and policymakers, all of whom would draw up very different types of rules if they were left to their own devices. Both ethicists and engineers stand to benefit from working together: ethicists may gain a greater understanding of their field by trying to teach ethics to machines, and engineers need to reassure society that they are not taking any ethical short-cuts.

Technology has driven mankind's progress, but each new advance has posed troubling new questions. Autonomous machines are no different. The sooner the questions of moral agency they raise are answered, the easier it will be for mankind to enjoy the benefits that they will undoubtedly bring.

Adapted from ***The Economist***
June 2012
(440 words)

MORE SLEEP FOR TEENS?

The sky is pitch-black at a school-bus stop in Olney, Maryland, but it might as well be midnight for 15-year-old Joe Palmer. His eyes are open, but his brain feels stalled. He wishes he were still in bed. It is 6:30 a.m., with sunrise still an hour away.

"I'm pretty much a zombie," he says as his bus pulls up. He drags himself aboard, bound for Sherwood High School.

The teen's lament is familiar across Montgomery County, where the opening bell of high school rings at 7:25. But such travails have taken on more urgency in recent weeks, propelling a burgeoning effort to change the hours of the high school day. The goal: a start time of 8:15 or later. The idea's at the heart of an online petition, started by a parent, that has garnered thousands of signatures since Oct. 15 and is firing up debate on community and school e-mail discussion groups. Students have signed on, too. "Either this or less homework. Please," wrote a teen.

Supporters say a growing body of sleep research shows that teens are biologically wired for later bedtimes and later wake-ups. And studies show that lack of sleep is linked to lower academic performance, absenteeism, and an increased risk of depression and car crashes.

Other students nap after school. They ask parents for rides, rather than take the bus, so they can sleep in as long as possible. One teen says being tired is one of the most discussed topics of every school day.

In Montgomery, the recent effort was started by Mandi Mader, a mother of two and a psychotherapist who found that a lack of sleep exacerbated the problems of her adolescent patients. Soon, she and others formed a Montgomery chapter of the national group Start School Later. The group is pressing the issue as a public-health concern – comparable to seat-belt use or secondhand smoke – and is seeking change through federal legislation or regulations. The petition is to be presented to the school board this month.

But not everyone is persuaded of the need. Some suggest that tired teens should just get to bed earlier – and stop their late-night texting and messaging on Facebook and Twitter.

However, experts say an hour of sleep a night does make a difference. For Joe Palmer, school-day wake-up starts at 5:30 a.m. in his Olney home. Often, his mother wakes him and makes him sit up, only to return and find him sleeping with no memory that she ever came into his room. His twin sister, Fiona, carries a favorite pillow onto her bus so she can grab 40 minutes of slumber en route to Gaithersburg High School.

For Joe, the bottom line is simple: "I need more sleep."

Adapted from ***The Washington Post***
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(459 words)

MOST EU NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS 'UNSAFE'

The so-called 'stress tests' on nuclear power plants in the European Union (EU) have confirmed environmental and energy activists' worst fears: most European nuclear facilities do not meet minimum security standards.

The tests on 133 nuclear reactors operating in 14 EU member states were carried out in response to widespread concern among the public that an accident similar to the catastrophic meltdown of Japan's Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power reactor in March 2011 could occur in Europe. According to the report, "EU citizens must... be confident that Europe's nuclear industry is safe."

But the findings of the report, released in Brussels on Oct. 4, suggest that, contrary to feeling safe, EU citizens have good reason to be afraid.

Only four countries "currently operate additional safety systems independent of the normal safety systems, located in areas well protected against external events."

Only seven countries are in possession of "mobile equipment, especially diesel generators needed in case of total loss of power, external events or severe accident situations."

The catastrophe of Fukushima, deemed the worst nuclear accident since the Chernobyl disaster of 1986, demonstrated that nuclear power plants must be protected even against accidents that have been deemed 'highly improbable'.

The EU stress tests only confirmed what environmental groups and anti-nuclear power activists have feared for years. Now, these groups are using the results of the tests to call for a gradual phasing out of nuclear power across the continent.

The results of the tests should lead to the immediate shutting down of all nuclear power plants situated in border regions, where nuclear accidents will not only impact the local environment and population but foreign regions and citizens as well.
Such measures would affect nuclear power plants in Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, France, Hungary, the Netherlands, the Slovak Republic, and Romania.

The stress tests also shed light on just how expensive nuclear power plants can be.
The EU assures that "All participating countries have begun to take operational steps to improve the safety of their plants", adding that "the costs of additional safety improvements are estimated to be in the range of 30 million to 200 million (euros) per reactor unit. Experts like Jo Leinen, a member of European Parliament, believe the money can be put to better use.

"Either the EU and its member states invest in upgrading the nuclear power plants to make them safer, or they shut them down," he told IPS. "If the upgrading actually costs 25 billion (euros), such a sum (could) be better invested in renewable energy sources."

Now, the EU stress tests have added yet another nail in the coffin of nuclear power.

The growing global share of renewable energy sources shows that a world free of nuclear power is possible and feasible.

Adapted from ***ipsnews.net***
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(460 words)

Anglais - Texte 60

MUSCULAR BODY IMAGE LURES BOYS INTO GYM, AND OBSESSION

Pediatricians are starting to sound alarm bells about boys who take unhealthy measures to try to achieve muscular bodies that only genetics can truly confer. Whether it is long hours in the gym, money blown on expensive supplements or even risky experiments with illegal steroids, the price American boys are willing to pay for the perfect body appears to be on the rise.

According to a recent study published in the journal Pediatrics, more than 40 percent of boys in middle school and high school said they regularly exercised with the goal of increasing muscle mass. Thirty-eight percent said they used protein supplements, and nearly 6 percent said they had experimented with steroids.

"There has been a striking change in attitudes toward male body image in the last 30 years," said Dr. Harrison Pope, a psychiatry professor at Harvard who studies bodybuilding culture. The portrayal of men as fat-free "is dramatically more prevalent in society than it was a generation ago," he said.

While college-age men have long been interested in bodybuilding, pediatricians say they have been surprised to find that now even middle school boys are so absorbed with building muscles. And their youth adds an element of risk.

Just as girls who count every calorie in an effort to be thin may do themselves more harm than good, boys who chase an illusory image of manhood may end up stunting their development, doctors say, particularly when they turn to supplements – or, worse, steroids – to supercharge their results.

"The problem with supplements is they're not regulated like drugs, so it's very hard to know what's in them," said Dr. Bhasin, a professor of medicine at Boston University School of Medicine. "Some contain anabolic steroids, and even high-quality protein supplements might be dangerous in large amounts, or if taken to replace meals. These things just haven't been studied very well," he said.

He added that anabolic steroids pose a special danger to developing bodies. Steroids stop testosterone production in men leading to terrible problems when still-growing boys try to stop taking them. Still, the constant association of steroids with elite athletes like Lance Armstrong perpetuates the notion that they can be managed successfully.

Online, in bodybuilding forums for teenagers, boys barely out of puberty share weight-lifting regimens and body fat percentages, and judge one another's progress.

"They ask us about everything," said Peter Rivera, a high school physical education teacher. "How do I lose weight? How do I gain muscle? How many times a week should I work out?" Mr Rivera explained that some boys want to be stronger for sports, but others want to change their body type.

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