

SPECTRUM

d for democracy How accessible are buildings on campus?

BARRICADES / UNB may be aesthetically pleasing, but it is not accessible for people with disabilities.

by Jamie Rowan

"... a draft charter was written, based on the 1754 Charter of King's College, New York, urging that the college never 'exclude or restrain any Person... of any religious Denomination, Sect, or Profession... from equal... Liberties, Privileges, [or] Degrees'"

- The 1992 University of New Brunswick Undergraduate Calendar, Section 1 - Historical Sketch

"All in all, it was all just bricks in the wall..."

- Another Brick in the Wall, Part 2, Pink Floyd

It is the first day of classes. You wake up very early in the morning, drag yourself out of bed, and grumble about having to wake up. After getting dressed, you skip breakfast to catch your bus, hope you can make it to the muffin place in the SUB before noon and head off towards your education. When you get to your building, you realize that you have a problem. Someone has built an impenetrable, impassable barrier between you and your class, between you and your very education! Most people ignore the barrier, but you can't. The barrier is called 'stairs', and they are impassable because you are in a wheelchair.

UNB is a very beautiful campus. Whoever designed it had a real eye for aesthetics, what with the nice green grass and trees shading and blending softly into the red brick and stone. What the designers and architects didn't have an eye for is accessibility. This campus is not even close to being accessible. Unfortunately, UNB is simply not an

option for the disabled. Many go to STU, because at least there you can feel like they want you and are making an effort.

You don't realize just how inaccessible this campus is until you look at every staircase, every set of steps, every step up (or down) as a wall. Try it: every time you come to a step, or a flight of stairs, turn around and try to find another way to your class. Do this for a day or even for a morning and you'll begin to realize the scale of the problem. If you still have trouble relating, imagine what would happen if you had a skiing accident, or a car wreck. I am enrolled in the department with perhaps the biggest problem: nearly all my classes are in Carleton Hall, which is completely inaccessible. If I were in a wheelchair, I would either have to find a new department, a new university or give up entirely.

Imagine having to pick classes and professors based solely on location, rather than content, utility or competence. Imagine whole buildings being off-limits to you. It isn't pleasant to contemplate, and its happening for no reason. UNB should be adopting a leadership role on this matter, but instead is lagging behind. The Registrar's office, after the Business Office the place where student's are most likely to have to go sometime in their academic career, is totally inaccessible. What is the University doing? To their credit, wherever possible ramps have been installed, but there is a lot more to this than just a few ramps. The removal of steps inside the building, wheelchair washrooms and elevators are also necessary. As far as the Registrar's office goes, because of the historic nature of the Old Arts Building, I doubt that it

would be possible to alter it to the extent necessary to make the office accessible. Therefore, the university should move the Registrar's Office, not use it as an excuse.

Yes, these alterations would be extremely expensive. However, I don't even think the University is trying. I would be surprised if someone wouldn't be interested in donating money to the cause of accessibility. If UNB asks for money from the provincial government, a refusal to provide accessibility funds would be a real political nightmare. However, I wonder if the university even cares. What I'm saying is that you never know, you just might get the money if you actually bothered to ask. It goes without saying that if there is any future construction on this campus, the new facilities will have to be completely accessible.

In today's global, ever changing marketplace, a university education is more of a prerequisite than a benefit. If Canada wants to keep its place at the table with the other industrialized nations, we must make it possible for all Canadians to educate themselves. At Trent University in Ontario there has been a lawsuit by a group of students over accessibility—and they won. I'm not advocating that there—at least not yet—but to allow a situation where a part of our population to be denied access is wrong, and to allow this to continue verges on the obscene. Our obligations seem to be clearer than our consciences: we have to start making this university universally totally accessible now.

The opinions found in Spectrum are not necessarily the views of the Brunswickan. People interested in writing for Spectrum must submit at least three (3) type-written articles of no more than 500 words each to the Brunswickan.

Metanoia Change

CONVERSION / A word not well liked, but necessary to understand in order to avoid mental stagnation

by John Valk

It's good to be back. Mind you, I also enjoyed the summer—rain, clouds and all. But that's history. It's now time for new endeavors: new opportunities, new challenges, new experiences.

A greeting to my co-columnists of the Spectrum Section. I look forward to your creative contributions. May your insightful commentary provide opportunities for fruitful discussion and dialogue as the year progresses.

I title my column *Metanoia*. Its a Greek word meaning "change" or "conversion". I came across it while writing a Master's Thesis on Mircea Eliade, a well-known (at least to some) scholar in Religious Studies. His usage of the word intrigued me.

The word "conversion" isn't much appreciated today though. Conversion is largely linked to church, with all its bad press. But that is too limiting and restrictive.

You see, we all change, even convert, as we go along in life. And that's a good thing. We ought not to be static—mental stagnation is not an enviable state.

One of the most rewarding experiences for faculty and staff is to see the degree of change occurring in students from the time they enter university to the time they graduate. And believe you me, there are changes, plenty of them.

While you are at UNB you will, no doubt about it, be exposed to the new and the bizarre. Facts and figures may overwhelm you. Information overload may even plague you. Your head may spin and you may be shaken to the core by the variety of views, lifestyles, modes of behavior and conduct that have all become part of the modern university.

Growth does not occur in seclusion. Four years of such exposure will effect you. It is bound to result in change, unless you are made of teflon. The big question is, **how** will you change? What kind of *metanoia* will you experience at UNB. What kind of things will impact, excite or shape you? What will you gravitate toward, what will you become?

At some point during your journey, you will need to sit down and seriously ask yourself what you are doing. If partying is your main thing, then you will want to know how you are faring with fellow drinking types, if your early morning classes are encroaching on your late night endeavors, if your liver and brain are keeping up with your undertakings.

If socializing is your prime focus, then you'll want to know about your status: how many people you can count as your friends, has your reputation spread, in spite of what you do are you still alone, do you have that empty, abused feeling the morning after.

If getting through university is your only objective, you'll want to know how your grades are stacking up, if your resumé is attractive enough, if you have the right skills and technical information for that high-paying job.

But if growth as a whole person is your goal, you will have considerably different objectives. The change you will be seeking will not be superficial nor limiting. You will care less for job training and more for knowledge. High grades will not be the goal, it will be wisdom and understanding. Education will be for exploring the unity and diversity of this world, not accumulating unrelated facts and information to be dispensed at graduation.

What you do with your time at university is a reflection of who you are as a person. It has to do with your meaning, value and purpose in life. That may be no more than drinking, socializing, high GPA's, high paying jobs. But it may also be more, much more. Any and all of this, of course, is a reflection of your spirituality, and that touches the very core of your being.

You see, you are already in the process of change. You are beginning to convert. And, you may **fully** convert—to a party animal, a social flit, one obsessed with facts, material gains, social status, power, or a well-rounded person—in tune with themselves and the world around.

A university experience is a wonderful once in a life-time opportunity. What you do with that opportunity is your choice. Make your sojourn at UNB a life-enriching experience. Above all, don't short-change yourself. You are spending enough of your "change" to be here in the first place.