

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As I write this, the sound of snowplows provides grinding background music, and I reflect that one of the gifts of retirement is that I no longer have to rise in the cold dark, clear the driveway and chip ice off the car to beat my way through the snow to make an early meeting. Winter has arrived and with it comes our planning for UGRA's 2024 events that include our two annual forums (I should say fora but that seems peevish) and the Annual General Meeting, all of which offer themed presentations, and our annual sponsored trip (this year to Morocco - see the article elsewhere in this issue).

This planning comes at a time of unprecedented fiscal crisis in the university sector, hampered as it is by government-imposed tuition ceilings, "corridor" funding that in effect taxes institutions with high enrolment, and an over-reliance on international student tuition (which creates a whole other set of problems: housing shortages, student poverty, and fewer spaces for domestic students). As the Toronto Star reports, 10 of the 23 public universities in Ontario are projecting deficits for this year. We cannot predict the outcome or the impact, if any, on our members but we will keep abreast of developments. Because we have had several enquiries from members on pension-related issues, we will be asking the UofG Pension and Benefits office to prepare a FAQ article on the impact of the crisis on retirees for a future newsletter.

Keeping on the topic of pensions and benefits, we are continuing our work to reach out to the various bargaining units on campus to discuss retirement issues their members may be facing and to ask what their concerns for the future might be. Some units are more receptive than others to these conversations. As many of us will recall, retirement seems like a vague and distant horizon until it isn't.

Our interest in advocacy is in part fueled by our sense that UofG retirees comprise an underutilized and underrepresented resource for the university, both as an archival knowledge bank and as an active community of unpaid labour-providers, whether that be research or technical or other services. We take pride, for instance, that two of our members, Ken Leslie and UGRA Vice-President Clarence Swanton,



have been ranked in the top ten list of researchers in biology, veterinary and agriculture sciences in Canada. As the fiscal crisis continues, we believe our voice needs to be heard and we are looking to have a discussion with the university regarding a UGRA seat on the University Senate. Now that the pension plan has been subsumed by UPP, we no longer have representation on the Board of Governor's standing committee that oversees pensions and benefits. Consequently, we have no forum for our views on matters that are of critical importance to all UGRA members.

On a housekeeping note, the executive has been working on a revision of the UGRA constitution for presentation at the Annual General Meeting. This is primarily to clarify procedures and eliminate ambiguity, but it will enshrine that UGRA meetings can be held in person or remotely or in a hybrid of both.

Accordingly, Save These Dates:

- Annual Spring Forum on April 18
- AGM on June 13.

Further details will be sent by eblast as they firm up. Both meetings will be held at the Arboretum Centre and you can choose to attend in person (coffee and snacks provided) or by Zoom. We are homing in on presentation topics for both meetings, and as always, are open to suggestions from you. What matters? What do you want to hear about? What do we need to talk about?

Best wishes for 2024. Let's all hope it's a better year ahead for the world.

Alan Filewod, President

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UGRA

Editor: Cathy Ralston

www.ugra.ca

UGRA Spring Forum

Thursday, April 18, 2024 from 2 to 4 pm
Arboretum Centre • Doors Open at 1:30 pm
Hybrid Meeting; Zoom opens at 1:30 pm

Save the date!



We will announce the topic and speakers closer to the date. Please watch your email and our website for more information.

Recent Retirees

October 31, 2023

Susan Craig	Student Housing Serv
Rosemary Jansen	PR/SHS Environmental
Ornella McCarron	AVP Research
Janet Thackray	Philosophy

November 30, 2023

Kevin Ecott	Mail Services
Timothy Gaw	Phys Res-Grounds
Nicola Rawski	Hospitality Services

December 31, 2023

Paul M Anglin	Mktg & Consumer Studies
Ann Barr	Phys Res-Custodial
Katherine Copeland	Asst VP Fin Services
Anita Dredge	LSD-BDO&Finance
Beth Eagen	RC-Academic
Michael Emes	Molecular & Cellular Bio
Byron Good	Plant Agriculture
Peter Grondin	Phys Res-Bldg Mech
Dennis McPhee	Athletics
Carolyn Miller	LSD-Diagnostics
Judy Tack	OVC-Dean's Office

January 31, 2024

Deborah Bailey	Integrative Biology
Nathalie Cote	Clinical Studies
Robert Dony	Sch of Engineering
Scott Douglas	OOL-Distance Ed
Douglas Horne	Office Uni Librarian
Anna T Lawniczak	Math & Statistics
Robert McLaughlin	Integrative Biology
Paul Mesman	PR-Plan&Eng&Constrn
Peter Sikkema	RC-Academic
Deborah Stacey	Sch of Computer Sci
Catharine Wilson	History



UNITED WAY

By Julie Hutchins

NEW UPDATE

2023 has ended, and UGRA retirees again stepped up. The campaign slogan was

WE CAN BETTER.
#betterispossible

We knew this was going to be a difficult campaign because of high interest rates, and increased costs for housing, food, and heating. Everyone is feeling the pinch. More people need help. United Way is working hard to help those in need. Every penny helps! This year, more than ever!

Retirees at the University of Guelph truly amaze me! We continue to help our community every year! This year we raised \$100,850. We could not do it without your help. United Way Guelph Wellington Dufferin and the University of Guelph thank you!

One lucky retiree benefited from her contribution. Ruth Switzer received the retiree prize consisting of:

- Elora's Candy Boutique gift certificate valued at \$25
- Farm to Paw Boutique and Market gift certificate valued at \$25
- Summer Blossom Honey (500 g jar) from UofG Apiaries



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Winter 2024

UGRA

Fall Forum Speaker Report ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

by Clarence Swanton

On November 16, 2023, the University of Guelph Retirees Association held their annual "Fall Forum". The theme for the forum was artificial intelligence (AI). This evolving technology can be thought of as "Google search on steroids". Generative AI is a type of artificial intelligence that uses machine learning to generate new content by analyzing and processing vast amounts of data from diverse sources. AI involves computer systems that are capable of performing human tasks such as learning, reasoning, and problem solving. AI technologies can even be designed to simulate human cognitive functions.

AI technology has gained acceptance rapidly within our society. It is viewed as a tool to enhance efficiency, solve complex problems, and improve various aspects of life. You can download several different apps for your phone that can put this technology right at your fingertips. Examples include ChatGPT, Microsoft Bing, Anthropic's Claude, and Google's Bard. It is important, however, to realise that ethical considerations and responsible AI development are crucial to mitigate potential risks associated with this technology. Risks include privacy concerns, transparency and accountability, data input biases, and the use of AI as technology

for misinformation and harm to society.

A.I.

Our Fall Forum this year brought together two very thought-provoking presentations. Our first presentation by Dr. Joshua Skorborg stressed the importance of maintaining a high ethical standard as this technology continues to be developed. The maintenance of ethical standards and AI technology are invariably linked. He highlighted concerns of maintaining protection of individual privacy, biases that can arise in data management and data evolution, equity issues particularly regarding who benefits and has access to AI technology, notably in terms of human health. What are the human and environmental costs of this technology?

The second presentation, given by Christopher Laursen and Dr. Tim Bartley was entitled "Navigating Through Surging Waters: Artificial Intelligence in Teaching and Learning." Students already are exploring the potential roles for this technology in facilitating their education. The question then becomes how to integrate this technology in a positive manner into the classroom? How can instructors clearly determine and communicate allowable uses of generative artificial intelligence in their courses?

Continued on page 5

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Winter 2024

Churchill, Manitoba Trip Summer 2023

By Peter Krell



*Some of the colourful lichen
aka winter forage for caribou*

The long awaited, Covid-delayed “Belugas, Bears and Blooms” tour to Churchill Manitoba, organized by your UGRA through the auspices of Vikki Tremblay (former UGRA President) materialized this past August 21 to 26. Since Churchill is accessible only by air or train, our adventure started in Winnipeg (muddy waters in Cree), where our group of nine (including UGRA members Norma and Bill Harrington, Éva Nagy and Peter Krell) first met Angele Watrin Prodael, our interpretive guide from “Frontiers North Adventures”. After a short (and calm) flight with Calm Air the next morning, we arrived in Churchill (aka Polar Bear Capital of the World) in time for lunch at the Seaport Restaurant followed by check-in at the, aptly named, Tundra Inn. Churchill is a small town of approximately 800 (56% indigenous) on the western shore of Hudson Bay at the mouth of the Churchill River. Churchill is named after John Churchill who was banished as third governor of the Hudson Bay Company (HBC) to Canada by King William III (John is a distant ancestor of Winston). The area around Churchill includes the ancestral home of the Thule people and their descendants, the Inuit, as well as Dene, Chipewyan and Cree. Through our visit to the Itsanitaq Museum, we got a better appreciation of Inuit carvings and artifacts from pre Dorset, Dorset, Thule and Inuit civilizations. We noticed small suspicious white dots floating in the waters around Churchill, but as daylight was ebbing, we had to wait until the next day for a closer look at the beluga whales, via a Zodiac tour of the Churchill River. The belugas were certainly not afraid of us as their pods followed the Zodiac and graced us with their swimming and diving abilities, including swimming upside down. Though their eyesight is poor, their advanced auditory systems allow them to echolocate and communicate (as we found out listening to them through underwater microphones), much like dolphins. Though mature belugas are white, their young are gray and often tagged along. While they teased us by following closely to the boat, they were somewhat reticent to having headshots taken. The guides could recognize many of the whales based on the scars on the belugas' backs.

Polar bears? Yes, there were polar bears with many signs around town and frequent warnings from Angele to never wander too far from the van, lest you come face to face with one. Our first

sighting of polar bears was from the water during a Zodiac tour to the Prince of Whales Fort (see below). First, there was one large male sauntering on the shore near the fort and soon a mother and cub came into view. Yes, they were cute, but they were also hungry and anxious to get on the sea ice that had not yet formed, to hunt for seals.

We experienced a close-up view of the flora and fauna of the local tundra, not by foot but in tundra buggies with huge wheels that kept the guests above the permafrost and the reach of curious polar bears. We saw many species of birds including eagles, gulls, green-winged teal, and Canada's national bird the Canada jay (or grey jay). We also came across a caribou, the only member of the deer family whose females have antlers. Though somewhat scarce, the black spruce were stunted, and asymmetric due to snow pruning on the side facing the wind. They are often referred to as flag trees. On the ground were many colourful lichens, a major winter forage for the caribou.



Our tour group, left to right John Parzer, Don and Jaymi Garvett, UGRA member Éva Nagy, Brenda Dale, UGRA members Norma and Bill Harrington, Sabine Haas from Germany and photographer extraordinaire, and Angele Watrin Prodaehl who knew all you wanted to know about Churchill history, geography and its inhabitants. Behind the camera, UGRA member, Peter Krell.

In addition to the natural flora and fauna, we visited several historic sites and points of interest in addition to the Prince of Wales Fort (built by the HBC in 1731, taken over by the French without a single shot in 1782 and repatriated to the HBC a year later). We saw the Rocket Research Range used in Churchill from 1957 to 1986 for shooting rockets into the upper atmosphere, in part to study the aurora borealis. We also saw the wreckage of “Miss Piggy” (since it once transported pigs), a freight plane that crashed near the town but with no casualties. We learned more about polar bears at the Polar Bear International Education facility, including how the creeping loss of sea ice (more evidence of climate change) is making their

Continued on page 6

UGRA Adventures

by Vikki Tremblay

Happy New Year everyone and I hope 2024 brings you all many new adventures!

I am happy to announce that there has been a lot of interest in the Morocco trip. There are still spots, so grab your partner and your BFFs and join us on this great new adventure. I was chatting with one of my clients who had just returned from Morocco and they said that it was an amazing country to explore.

The trip departs November 21, 2024 for 12 amazing days. Check the itinerary at <https://ugra.ca/sites/default/files/uploads-/2023/Morocco%20Trip%20Itinerary.pdf>. It's jam-packed with adventure. The cost is \$3,729 CAD per person (based on double occupancy) plus prepaid gratuities of \$143 US per person (for tour guides, drivers, etc.). The deposit is \$450 CAD per person with the final payment due September 10, 2024. Inclusions are economy airfare from Toronto, 4 to 5 star hotel accommodations, entrance fees to attractions, English speaking guides, sightseeing per itinerary, modern air-conditioned motor coach, all transportation at the destination, and meals as indicated on the itinerary. A video is available at <https://youtu.be/B5hq-zCCNMo>. Note the video includes a 4-day trip to Lisbon, Portugal that is not included in our trip because you will lose two of those days flying that negates the extra costs.



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Vik's Tips

How to efficiently pack a suitcase:

- Roll your clothing tightly
- Put heavier items at the 4 corners and walls
- Put rolled jeans and pants on top of shoe layer
- Lighter items like sweaters go in next
- Shirts and delicates that can't be rolled go in next
- Finally cosmetic bags/toiletries go in last

Divide your money into roughly 3 equal amounts and place in 3 separate spots: one-third in your wallet, one-third in your suitcase and one-third in your handbag/man bag. If you are mugged or lose one of these items, you'll still have some money. It's also savvy to use an ID protection bag/wallet to protect your credit card information from being stolen.

Be aware of the type of electrical outlets used in the country you are visiting. Now is the time to check and buy the appropriate power adapter. The last thing you want to be doing when you get to your destination is scouring stores for one.

Know your flight attendant slang:
 Blue juice – water inside the toilet
 Bottle-to-throttle – amount of time a pilot must abstain from consuming alcohol prior to flying
 Crotch watch – time to make sure people have their seatbelt fastened properly
 Deadhead – crew member who is hitching a ride somewhere
 Gate lice – people clustered around front of plane
 George – nickname for plane's autopilot
 Slinging hash – meal service time
 Steorage – section of plane with cheapest seats
 Two-for-one special – when plane bounces off ground during takeoff

Always make sure to add your travel companion's name to your hotel booking. Many hotels aren't allowed to grant access or give additional keys to people who haven't been registered to the room, even if you have the same last name.

Did you know that Wikipedia has a sister website for travelers? It's called Wikivoyage, a site where volunteer authors can write travel guides with tips and experiences about travel destinations and topics, and then others can edit it or add to it. It's a great way to learn about your next destination trip.



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE Continued from page 3

Generative AI use within the classroom raises issues of academic integrity. Did the student write the essay or did generative AI? How do you protect intellectual property, minimize student over-reliance on this technology and prevent the student from learning misinformation generated by AI? Insights were provided on ways to incorporate and enhance student learning with AI through novel course design, academic content and learning support mechanisms for students.

As with all technologies, there are both benefits and major concerns. How we integrate and use this technology in an ethical manner to benefit society as a whole will be a constant challenge.

UGRA

Winter 2024

CHURCHILL MANITOBA REPORT *Continued from page 4*

existence more precarious. There is even a polar bear jail for those that might endanger the local inhabitants. After a short incarceration these bears are moved away from the town and, when available, to distant ice floes where there is ample food. Many people, including our group, visit Churchill on the off chance to see the Aurora Borealis. We were not disappointed, as Angele woke those who wanted to see the Aurora at 1:00 a.m. on two mornings and we were rewarded with an amazing light show, though cautioned to stay near the van, just in case..... Well, you know about the warnings.

All in all, it was an exciting and educational experience of what northern Canada has to offer, made all the more interesting by the many knowledgeable and engaging guides and locals, including the belugas and polar bears.



A curious Canada jay visiting Èva.



Green-winged teal showing a splash of green under her wing



A Canada jay resting on a shed moose antler.



Polar bear mother and cub posing for the camera.



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Passings

Thomas Tritschler	September 8, 2023
Rodney Gentry	September 12, 2023
James Neil Godwin	September 18, 2023
George Loney	October 3, 2023
Robert Chadder	October 8, 2023
Larry Hoy	October 9, 2023
Else Veldman	October 12, 2023
Joyce Judson	October 14, 2023
Robert Liptrap	October 14, 2023
Roberta Simkin	October 14, 2023
John Gilmour	October 18, 2023
Michael Keefer	October 19, 2023
John Hurst	October 24, 2023
Eugene Brailsford	November 4, 2023
John Mandolesi	November 5, 2023
Gordon Scheifele	November 6, 2023
John Jordan	November 24, 2023
Michael Herbert	November 25, 2023
Lorraine Bryenton	December 6, 2023
Ronald J Brooks	December 18, 2023
William Webb	December 23, 2023
Joan E Hatch	January 10, 2024



Did you have questions?

If you have questions about your benefits, please contact Sun Life by checking your claim at <https://www.sunnet.sunlife.com/signin/mysunlife/home.wca> or calling 1-800-361-6212. If you have questions about your pension or to change your address or status, please check out this website: <https://www.uoguelph.ca/hr/retire>. If you have other questions or concerns, please contact UGRA at ugra@uoguelph.ca and we will see if we can help.



Did you know?

The University of Guelph Retirees Association aims to foster a mutually beneficial relationship between retirees and the University of Guelph and to advocate for our members in matters such as access to university facilities and resources. The UGRA works hard to keep our members up to date on the university community through emails, newsletters and meetings and, from time to time, also shares information that is of more general interest to retirees.

All UGRA members are also members of CURAC that offers many benefits including discounts for insurance and travel, as well as access to educational events at other participating institutions. For details, check their website <https://curac.ca>.

The UGRA is run by fellow retirees who freely volunteer their time and talents. Funds needed to run the UGRA come mostly from members' contributions. With your support, we can maintain an electronic presence, produce the newsletters, as well as hold the AGM, spring and fall forums, and other events and activities to keep you connected to the university and fellow retirees. You can send feedback by email or physical mail.

Be a Contributing Member of the UGRA (2024)

We hope you enjoy this newsletter, our informative website (<https://ugra.ca/>), and our various on-campus functions throughout the year. An annual contribution of \$25 from you goes a long way in sustaining the UGRA so we can continue to work on your behalf.

University of Guelph Retirees Association Contributing Membership (2024) Form

☐ YES! I want to help promote the welfare of retirees and to foster a mutually beneficial relationship between retirees and the University by contributing to the UGRA's administrative costs.

My contribution is \$.....

Name..... Date.....

Address.....

City/Province..... Postal Code.....

Email..... Phone.....

(Note that the email address will be used for UGRA communications only.)

Please make your cheque payable to the University of Guelph Retirees Association. Mail this form with your cheque to: University of Guelph Retirees Association • PO Box 48-4916 • University of Guelph • Guelph Ontario, N1G 2W1

Electronic Payment

Instead of mailing in a cheque, you can now make a secure donation to UGRA electronically using PayPal and your credit card on our web page at: <https://ugra.ca/join-us>. You can also use e-transfer to pay using the email address ugraEtransfers@gmail.com. If you are new to e-transfers, we have provided a short primer <https://ugra.ca/join-us>



UGRA

Winter 2024

How to Contact Us

Don't hesitate to contact us with your questions, comments, and concerns. To advocate on your behalf, we truly want, and need, to hear from you. Here are the ways to contact us – don't forget to provide your name and contact information in your message so we can follow up promptly.

By Email:

ugra@uoguelph.ca

By Letter:

University of Guelph
Retirees Association
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Guelph, ON N1G 2W1

Advertising in the Newsletter

Do you have something to sell, rent, buy or announce for the next edition of the Newsletter? You may purchase space for a coloured box ad of various sizes, or a simple classified ad by contacting the Editor for prices. The next deadline is Friday, April 12, 2024.



PUBLICATIONS MAIL AGREEMENT NO. 40064673

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