

# THE McGill Daily

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## editorial board

3480 McTavish St, Room 107  
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phone 514.398.6790  
fax 514.398.8318  
mcgilldaily.com

The McGill Daily is located on  
unceded Kanien'kehá:ka territory.

coordinating editor

Andrei Li

managing editor

Sena Ho

news editor

Adair Nelson

commentary + compendium! editor

Ingara Maidou

culture editor

Isabelle Lim

Younna El Halabi

features editor

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science + technology editor

Vacant

sports editor

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visuals editor

Eva Marriott-Fabre

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copy editor

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social media editor

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cover design

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staff writers

Lisa Banti, Mara Gibeau, Aurélien

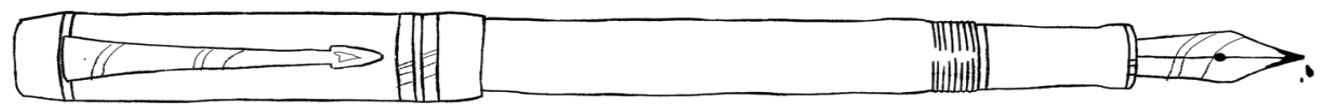
Lechantre,

Anahi Pellathy

contributors

Julia Apitz-Grossman, Justin

Friedberg



# Journalism Under Siege

It has been over 700 days since the start of Israel's ongoing aggression and genocide on the Gaza strip. The death toll keeps rising, and Gaza's population is declining. Mass killings by Israeli airstrikes and Israel's blockade of food supplies have resulted in widespread suffering and starvation among Palestinians. Just a few weeks ago, the United Nations (UN) declared famine in the Gaza Strip.

As of September 1, the recorded number of famine-induced deaths stands at 361, including 130 children, according to Al-Jazeera.

Throughout these past seven hundred days, Israel's blatant violations of humanitarian law have been thoroughly documented by Palestinian journalists. In response, Israel has escalated its systematic targeting of the press in Gaza.

On August 10, Israel attacked a press tent located outside of al-Shifa hospital, murdering six Al-Jazeera correspondents, among them renowned and beloved-by-all journalist Anas al-Sharif. The attack also killed correspondent Mohammed Qreiqeh, camera operators Ibrahim Zaher and Mohammed Noufal, freelance cameraman Momen Aliwa, and freelance journalist Mohammed al-Khalidi.

Anas al-Sharif is one of the many media professionals who have been targeted by the Israeli government during this genocide. He was a 28-year-old journalist who had reported extensively from the north of Gaza since the start of the genocide. He gained an extensive following in the past two years, one of his most famous televised sections being his jubilant announcement confirming the ceasefire this past January. In the televised segment, Al-Sharif stood tall, surrounded by his peers, speaking into the microphone, and removed his press vest in a symbolic gesture marking the end of the genocide, and his coverage of the scene.

Seven months later, Israel killed him.

Just two weeks after al-Sharif's assassination, Israel murdered five journalists and several healthcare workers in a double-tap strike on Nasser Hospital.

As of September 1, Al-Jazeera reports the total number of martyred journalists has risen to at least 278 since October 7, 2023. These attacks are part of Israel's widespread efforts to erase first-hand documentation of its crimes against Palestinians.

Ayham Al-Sahli, Palestinian journalist from Haifa, wrote in an opinion piece for *Al-Akhbar* newspaper, "One of the major challenges in Gaza is the lack of strong independent Palestinian media institutions capable of preserving and managing such an archive. Aside from the official Palestinian news agency WAFA, and a few others that have attempted to work in Gaza, no Palestinian body is maintaining a comprehensive record of the way. After two years, much of their capacities to continue operations have diminished, leaving the substantial archives in the hands of foreign media organizations."

This comment sheds light on major issues regarding Palestinian press safety. The absence of archival preservation from Palestinian journalists on the genocide is directly linked to the ongoing killings of

journalists. Thus, this leads to a strong deficit in authentic, native, on-the-ground storytelling, leaving the reporting up to "foreigners."

The targeting of Palestinian journalists dates back to before the start of the Gaza genocide. In May 2022, Al-Jazeera reporter Shireen Abu-Akleh was shot in the head and killed by Israeli soldiers while covering a raid in Jenin, a city in the occupied West Bank.

Abu-Akleh was a prominent name, having reported for Al-Jazeera for more than 25 years. Several Israeli Defense Force (IDF) statements claimed she got caught in a crossfire between soldiers and Palestinian resistance fighters, but those were quickly disproven. Abu-Akleh was wearing a press vest and standing with other journalists when she was killed.

The press vest should have been enough to protect Shireen Abu-Akleh.

The press vest should have been enough to protect Anas al-Sharif.

The press vest should be enough to protect journalists from being targeted.

Since 1977, the Geneva Convention has implemented amendments to clauses asserting the protection of journalists. Moreover, the United Nations (UN) website sets journalism as being "fundamental for sustainable development, human rights protection, and democratic consolidation." In 2012, the UN implemented the "Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity" addressing the prevention of violence against journalists and the protection of the press. Yet these suggestions are not legally binding, leaving journalists vulnerable to attacks by repressive regimes.

Under international humanitarian law, journalists in armed conflict hold civilian status and must be protected. Yet, when it comes to Palestinian journalists, we see nothing but frivolous words of sorrow, prayers, and eulogies.

In fact, at the time of al-Sharif's martyrdom, CNN and BBC made it a point to link him to the Islamist resistance group, Hamas. *La Presse* goes so far as to highlight Israeli claims of al-Sharif being a "terrorist posing as a journalist," despite al-Sharif's numerous statements that he was a journalist with no political affiliations. Such accusations and harmful narratives have only one aim: to dehumanize Palestinian journalists, and shut down any and all solidarity with them.

This begs the question: what qualifies as being a journalist? And why is it that some journalists' lives matter more than others?

Al-Sharif and his peers have to work twice as hard as others to prove their journalistic integrity and commitment to the truth, while they stand strong in the face of dangers some of us will never be brave enough to even face. In addition to being systematically hunted down by Israel, Palestinian journalists also face the delegitimization of their profession.

As journalists who are committed to reporting on the truth, we cannot remain silent while our peers in Palestine are being martyred. We must push for their security, fight to keep their voices heard, and preserve their dignity.

An attack on one of us is an attack on all of us.

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SOCIÉTÉ DES PUBLICATIONS DU DAILY

3480 McTavish St, Room 107  
Montreal, QC H3A 0E7  
phone 514.398.690  
fax 514.398.8318

advertising & general manager

Letty Matteo

ad layout & design

Alice Postovskiy

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## CONTACT US

COORDINATING	<a href="mailto:coordinating@mcgilldaily.com">coordinating@mcgilldaily.com</a>	MANAGING	<a href="mailto:managing@mcgilldaily.com">managing@mcgilldaily.com</a>
NEWS	<a href="mailto:news@mcgilldaily.com">news@mcgilldaily.com</a>	PHOTOS	<a href="mailto:visuals@mcgilldaily.com">visuals@mcgilldaily.com</a>
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# Highlighting Sudan's Humanitarian Crisis

## Amidst civil war, el-Fasher remains under siege while humanitarian crisis devastates civilians

**Aurelien Lechantre**  
Staff Writer

For over 500 days, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a Sudanese paramilitary group, have besieged the city of el-Fasher in North Darfur, Sudan. The siege has resulted in an unprecedented human crisis, beginning in April 2024, symptomatic of the violence of the civil conflict that broke out a year earlier.

In 2019, Sudan was left in turmoil after the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) (overthrew dictator and President al-Bashir, who had ruled over Sudan since 1989. The leaders of the coup, namely General Abdel Fattah-al-Burhan, head of the SAF and General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, or 'Hemedti', leader of the RSF, rejected civilian rule and overturned the government together in 2021. Burhan became the head of government with Hemedti as his equal. As allies, the RSF and the SAF fought off rebel groups in North Darfur jointly, but were already showing a tendency for excessive violence, notably against civilians. When collaborating, both groups were accused of perpetuating war-crimes, including genocide and ethnic cleansing, notably targeting non-Arab populations of North Darfur or Kordofan. Yet the eventual merging of the RSF into the Sudanese Army began to create tensions between the two men over who would lead the united force, and thus hold power in Sudan.

Hence it was not long until hostilities began in Khartoum, Sudan's capital. On April 15 2023, the first shots of the civil war were fired, with the RSF and the SAF each accusing the other of firing

“The lives of children are hanging in the balance” amidst the blocking of aid and the continued food scarcity.

first. The conflict rapidly spread to Darfur, North Kordofan, and the Gezira – strongholds of the RSF. Khartoum is in the hands of the Sudan Armed Forces after seizing it in March 2025, even if the city is not unscathed. As the SAF were forced to retire from the capital, the army of General Dagalo took revenge on civilians, as witnessed by Anne Applebaum, journalist for the Atlantic. Dalago's RSF forces not only looted and destroyed the city's infrastructure, but turned their artillery towards residential neighbourhoods as they were losing ground in the capital throughout March. Furthermore, the conflict incited new waves of ethnically motivated attacks, and violence directed towards non-Arab communities has sparked up, with accusations on both parties of the civil war.

The siege of el-Fasher illustrates the extent of the disaster the conflict has on the Sudanese population. While over half of Sudan suffers from malnutrition – with 24.6 out of its 46 million citizens exposed to acute hunger and 637,000 people on the brink of famine – the situation is only amplified in el-Fashe. Supply lines have been cut by the RSF siege on the city, leaving UN food and supply convoys vulnerable and unable to reach their destinations. Human Rights groups like the Committee for Justice and Amnesty International and UN experts accuse the RSF and SAF rebels of weaponising food. UN experts predict that the situation is bound to get worse over time, especially considering the effects of environmental instability – such as recent severe droughts “the lives of children are hanging in the balance” amidst the blocking of aid and the continued food scarcity. and floods in Sudan – on the ongoing hunger crisis.

Though 600,000 people, over half of which are children, were able to flee el-Fasher, 260,000 people, including about 130,000 children, remain trapped in the besieged city. UNICEF chief Catherine Russell warns about the extent of children's rights violations in el-Fasher, expressing that “the lives of children are hanging in the balance” amidst the blocking of aid and the continued food scarcity. Since the beginning of the siege, UNICEF have registered over 1,100 grave children rights violations, including the killing and maiming of children but also sexual violence and abduction by different armed groups.

Contaminated water sources



Eva Mariott-Fabre | Visuals Editor

have led to a historic outbreak of cholera in Sudan, the worst in decades. There are over 100,000 suspected cases in the country and 2,400 cholera-related fatalities with an epicentre in el-Fasher. The current siege in addition to subsequent power and electricity cuts renders the healthcare system in the city completely inoperant, worsening the epidemic and the conditions of citizens.

Those who have managed to escape el-Fasher are not necessarily better off. The conflict's rapid spread from Khartoum to other cities in Sudan has led to mass displacement. According to the last available data, over 12 million people have been forcefully displaced in Sudan, not including the refugees already living in neighbouring countries, making this the worst displacement crisis in the world. Displaced people from both el-Fasher and Khartoum face epidemics, hunger, and other hardships while having access to little or no aid.

The RSF has also besieged the

city of el Obeid, a key entry point into central Sudan, as well as Dilling and Kadugli in Kordofan – and the limited aid coming into Sudan can no longer suffice. Despite the gravity of the humanitarian situation in Sudan, the international community remains silent, according to officials from the UN and Amnesty International. UN Health Chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus condemned the lack of interest in Sudan's situation, telling the BBC “I think race is at play here.” Amnesty International has described the international response to the crisis as “woefully inadequate”.

Until 2024, USAID was the main support Sudan received. Therefore, US President Donald

Trump's recent decision of cutting aid directly impacts Sudan. The cuts were radical, with 83 per cent of the staff of USAID dismissed. For its part, the Canadian Government claims to engage itself deeply in humanitarian aid through UN agencies and trusted partners. However, that has been largely insufficient to solve the humanitarian crisis in Sudan.

Though the Sudanese conflict has been cast into the shadows in the international press, humanitarian activist groups like UNICEF, Amnesty International or the International Rescue Committee continue to act to ensure that civilians receive dire aid amidst the siege.

The siege of el-Fasher illustrates the extent of the disaster the conflict has on the Sudanese population.

# Balancing Bilingual CEGEPs' Institutional Autonomy Amidst Bill 96 Language Regulations

LaSalle College balances its duty to students' academic independence regardless of linguistic background and obligations to Quebec law

**Mara Gibea**  
Staff Writer

LaSalle College, a private bilingual general and vocational college (CEGEP), admitted last December to surpassing the 716-student quota for 2023-2024 and the 1,066-student threshold for 2024-2025 set by Bill 96. Effective since 2022, the bill amended the Charter of the French Language regarding the distribution of anglophone students enrolled in CEGEP's Attestation of College Studies (ACS) and Diploma of College Studies (DCS) programs. This is penalizable by reducing government funding to the private college, which includes some of the operating costs and tuition, under chapter C-11, r. 13 of the Charter of the French Language. As a result, the college has requested negotiations with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEES) of Quebec in a letter to Ministers Déry and Roberge, dated

December 9, 2024, to provide a "transition period for 2024-2025" to allow them to become fully compliant this fall.

The president and CEO of LaSalle College, Claude Marchand, told CBC that negotiations between the school and educational ministers have been delayed since August 2021. Marchand hoped to negotiate with the new minister Premier François Legault before August 18, when faculty returned to the college. The lack of negotiation prompted a cancellation of the first day of classes on August 25, which resumed the next day in order to catch the minister's attention. In the meantime, the institution is challenging MEES's fine of \$30 million in a case submitted in July 2024 to the Quebec Superior Court. The college further challenges the data used in MEES's decision. LaSalle claims this challenge was indirectly validated by Superior Court of Quebec Judge Éric Dufour's 2023 verdict that out-

of-province tuition hikes triggered by Bill 96 at McGill and Concordia were "not justified by existing and convincing data". In the case of LaSalle College, a student expressed concern over the government's financial threat, admitting in an interview with CityNews, "I'm worried that either they're going to shut down the school because of lack of funding or make our tuition much higher, which is obviously going to be higher on everyone," not exclusively for international /out-of-province students.

As the only private CEGEP penalized by the government, "[i]t's really our belief that we did nothing wrong," said Marchand in an interview with the CBC. However, other private CEGEPs negotiated their quotas, and LaSalle College did receive warnings concerning the penalization of their misconduct. On one hand, LaSalle College defended themselves on their website,

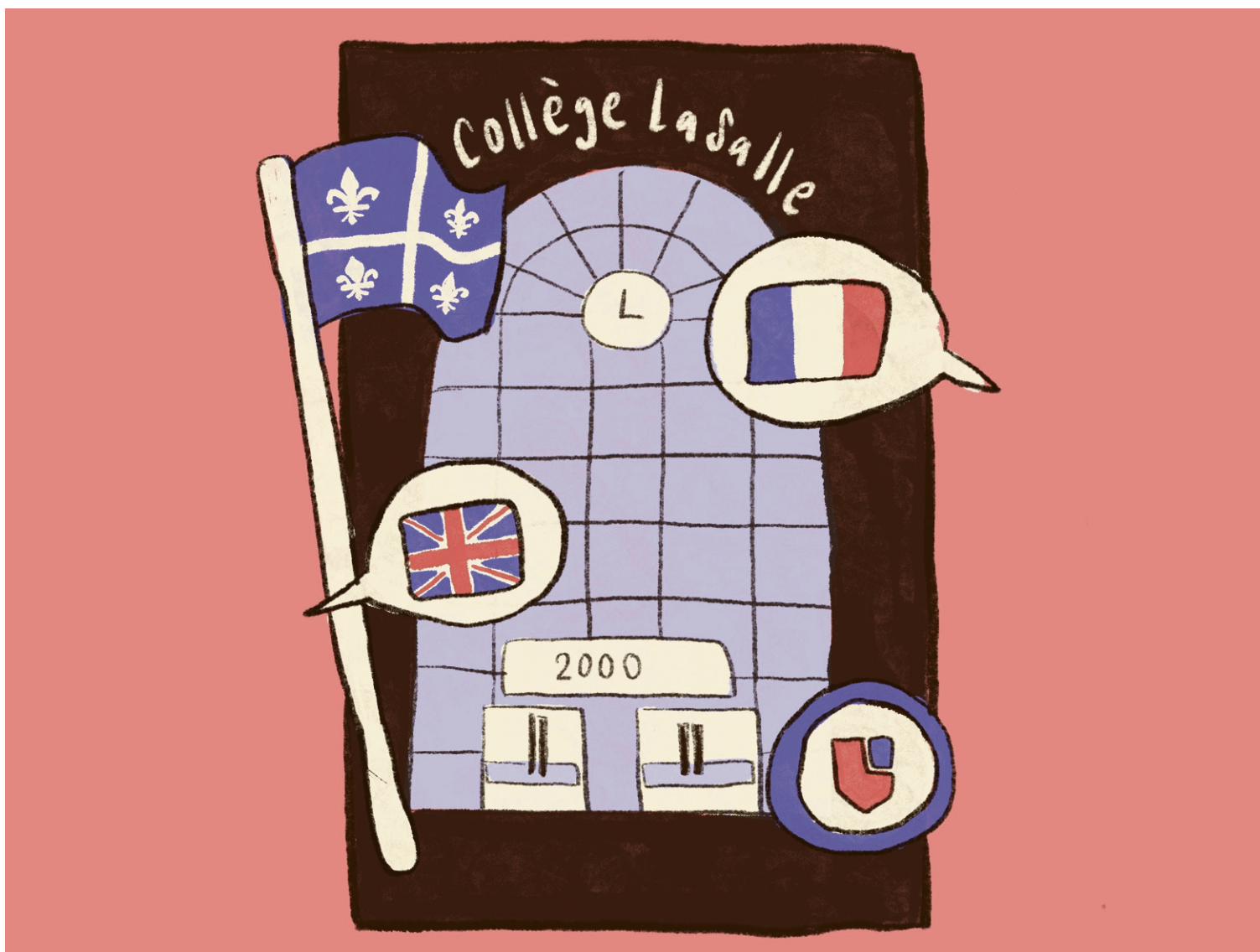
explaining that the timing of the February 2023 quotas followed after the admission of international students, which are done a year prior to the commencement of the school year. Thus, applicants had already been legally admitted for the fall of 2023 prior to the quota amendments, and as a result, the institution had a responsibility to not cancel the students' contracts. On the other hand, the college also admitted on their website to having prior knowledge of the quotas and exceeding them. This is in line with MEES's statement to CBC that the college "knowingly broke the law." In other words, the court must now decide if LaSalle College's misconduct with Quebec's language laws warrants avoiding the potential illegality of rejecting students after their admissions contract.

Moreover, the monetary penalties totaling \$30 million threaten the institution itself, as the sum makes up almost half of

the college's annual \$70 million budget. The penalty for 2023-2024 totals \$8.7 million and just over 21 million for 2024-2025, as confirmed by the Minister of Higher Education in letters dated June 28, 2024, and June 30, 2025, to LaSalle College, which can be found on the college's website. The college responded on December 9, 2024, asking the government for an "impact analysis" and a "rescue plan." They explain that, under fines, the students' education would suffer as collateral and the staff's employment would be at risk, threatening the service of specialized programs like hospitality services, as well as fashion and video game programming, which they claim are rarely offered in other CEGEPs and feed into Quebec's labour force. Fewer international students would also decrease Quebec's footprint, particularly in the African Francophonie and in the LCI Education network that spans across ten countries.

Marchand further described the MEES's monetary penalties as "abusive," while the Minister of Higher Education, Pascale Déry, described the college's protest as holding students "hostage," especially after the MEES offered alternative negotiations that did not involve delaying the first day of school. Nonetheless, the College sent a discretionary email to its students on August 25 to inform them of the cancellation of classes and that despite this, the campus would still be open. The notice explained that, as a private institution subsidized by the Quebec government, LaSalle College could not continue to service their students when the government "assumes 40 percent of the cost for each Quebec student" and would not continue doing so to the same extent considering the penalties imposed. It is important to note that, according to LaSalle College, the CEGEP has not asked for additional subsidies for international students, which was disclosed in a letter to the Minister of French Language.

While the CBC reports that LaSalle College has adjusted their numbers for this fall per Bill 96's quotas, negotiations regarding penalties are still underway as Minister Déry called Marchand back to negotiations as classes resumed.



# Open Air Pub: Where Music Meets Community

## Behind the Scenes of the Best Place on Earth

Isabelle Lim,  
Younna El Halabi  
Culture Editors

**F**or this piece, The McGill Daily sought to interview every single OAP act as well as the members of OAP management. All parties in the above demographic who are not represented in this article either did not respond to our request for an interview or did not have any contact that we could find.

Lower field: bell-like peals of laughter, the faint aroma of grilled burger patties, and a snaking queue of students stretching around the perimeter of what looks like an outdoor party with an endless waitlist. Friends separated over the summer reunite with shrieks and hugs to the exhilarating soundtrack of musicians playing just steps away. It's no surprise some McGill students, and the event itself, call Open Air Pub (OAP) the "Best Place on Earth".

Since 1987, OAP's legacy has resonated across generations of McGill students as the stage for golden memories. Ivan Zhang, one half of the Head Management duo for the most recent edition of OAP, tells us he found the first documented mention of OAP in the 1980 McGill Yearbook, which at the time was a gathering of engineers at Three Bares Park for Welcome Week 1980. Now organised by the Engineering Undergraduate Society (EUS), OAP has grown exponentially in scale, taking up half of McGill's Lower Field and attracting thousands of McGill students, alumni, and their external plus-ones alike.

The COVID-19 pandemic halted OAP for a few years, which was enough to weaken the event's influence and place in the collective McGill consciousness. "We saw a few years of not-great profitability and lower capacities post-COVID," says Zhang. "Right after COVID, there was a bit of a lull where McGill students didn't even know what OAP was, especially the new ones coming in." Now, after some time and vested publicity efforts, it's back and bigger than ever, renowned for its cheap (though warm) alcohol, good food, and overall vibrant ambience.

As one of the few large inter-cohort McGill social events, organizing OAP is, naturally, a



Photo courtesy of Isabelle Lim

massive endeavour. From supplying various food and beverage options to recruiting managers, bands, and artists to spray the iconic OAP stage graffiti, the 13-member team works tirelessly both on and off the ground to ensure the event runs smoothly. Most recently, the OAP team has implemented new environmental initiatives which have, according to Nicole Shen, OAP's food manager, earned them a Gold certification from the McGill Sustainability Office. These developments include the introduction of new mats to protect the grass on Lower Field, the recycling of cans (rather than giving out plastic cups), and the use of propane rather than charcoal grills for food, among others.

Providing the soundtrack to this one-of-a-kind student festival are a variety of bands, singers and DJs. This year, OAP hosted 26 amazing acts. From soulful harmonies and acoustic covers to head-banging rock tunes and DJ sets, there was truly something for everyone. A

few of the acts actually found their start at McGill, despite the predominantly academic environment. DJ Clément Gabriel, who describes his music as "dark and euphoric", learned how to mix in an hour before a party at his former fraternity. In addition, rock band Dollhouse recruited their bassist Sacha when drummer Emilio spotted him walking around with his bass at Activities Night last year.

In fact, the significance of OAP within the McGill community means that many performers had already attended the event from below the stage. Of course, this means that they are or were McGill students themselves, lovingly carving out time between tutorials and lectures to hone their craft. Still, the process of becoming an OAP act is complex and multilayered, with the OAP team having to sift through a substantial number of applications and music samples.

OAP has provided a platform for students to test the boundaries of expression and find their own unique voices. Experimental DJ

trio Dance Engine describes OAP as "a really nice musician[s] playground" where they can showcase "what they really want to do" because of the "easy to win" receptiveness of McGill students to novel ideas and new music. Similarly, DJ Nina Baby closed this year's OAP Boiler with "music that [she's] rarely had the chance to play", sharing her infectious electronic sound with the McGill masses.

OAP has even pushed new voices to the forefront. The common pursuit of a good time across all involved parties fuels OAP's lively and accepting atmosphere. Compared to other festivals, the beauty of OAP is that the person on stage could also be your friend, which makes it all the more exciting. Acoustic folk duo Dave and Sarah (whose names are neither Dave nor Sarah) describe the sensation of performing at OAP as "not even comparable" to their previous gigs, not just because of OAP's sheer scale but also because "everyone knew [them], which made it scarier but also so much fun."

The added layer of thrill as a result of being surrounded by familiar company rings true not just for OAP's performing artists, but for their patrons, who get to commemorate the end of summer (or winter, depending on when you go) by letting loose amidst a crowd of friendly faces. "As a student, I love that I get to hang out [at OAP] with my friends, and also play there as an artist," house-inspired DJ Dante says. By playing for the community he is part of, he feels like he can stay true to the sound he loves. "You can kind of tell when you're in the that the positive feeling people experience kind of rubs off on each other."

Moreover, OAP's relatively relaxed format extends music and performance not only to those who practice it professionally, but to anyone with love and respect for the craft. "We are engineers, but we have hobbies," jokes Nella Craft, one of OAP's music managers. As mentioned, many of the acts are McGill students or alumni from various faculties and disciplines.

GarageMDs, for instance, is a band made up of McGill medical students – not your usual candidates for a school band, given the rigour of their program. Moreover, Gianni, founding member of dream rock band Flying Dream, is a post-doctoral fellow in the McGill Faculty of Engineering. “Academia and research are fascinating, but they’re very rigid [...] Music is more free, and you [have room to] explore.”

That being said, OAP’s free-flow is also calculated. As one of the main goals is to keep the audience entertained, the event’s management must curate cohesive sets throughout the event. Niney, a Montreal-based DJ, says he enjoys this aspect of the festival. “The goal is to bring it from zero to on the way to the tech house,” he shares, “so I had to get [the crowd] dancing, to sing songs they may or may not know.” Niney describes himself as an avid dancer, and changing up his style to get a crowd warmed up and grooving is one of his favourite things to do. OAP allows for this part of him to shine. “As a DJ, you can never have too many styles.”

However, music serves many more functions than just inducing hype in a crowd. It provides the soundtrack for our morning commutes and gym sessions, sets the mood at our local cafes and bars – it surrounds us, giving it immense and intrinsic power. Mica, a disco music DJ says, “Music exists in many forms in every aspect of my life. Study nights, kickin’ it with friends, football games, preparing food – no matter what I’m doing, there’s always a perfect soundtrack.” With the growth of streaming services and subsequent increased accessibility of music, it has become so integrated into our daily lives that we might not fully appreciate its special quality.

This year, Welcome Week was an unqualified success. Thousands of students participated in the veritable cavalcade of events: dances, trips, athletic events, coffee houses, films and much more. It was encouraging to see all the hard work which was put into Welcome Week over the summer months was not in vain.

There are so many people to thank that it would take several pages in this book to accomplish such a task. However, we would like to extend special thanks to a few people, namely, Jo-Ann Muller, Earle Taylor, Cathie Sheeran, Maureen Tobin, Carl Jones, Tracey Sheeran, Keith Jones and all the volunteers, whose dedication and hard work made Welcome Week '80 a very good time for everyone concerned. Good luck and best wishes to next year's committee!

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Dianne Kirkwood	Open Air Pub Chairman
Mary Laganopolous	Assistant Open Air Pub Chairman

Photo courtesy of Ivan Zhang

Music has the capacity to influence our thoughts and emotions, not only stimulating our senses but acting as a mode of idiosyncratic expression.

This is no different amongst the performers of OAP, to whom music is a multi-functional tool that holds a special place in their hearts. When asked how music has enriched his life, Owen, founding member and lead

guitarist of Montreal indie rock band Willy Nilly, joked, “My depression now has a musical twist to it,” referencing songwriting’s critical role in conveying his personal realities. Dollhouse’s genre-bending songs, composed and arranged by the entire group, also tackle a plethora of issues like mental health and activism, among others. “It’s just like, we hear you,” says Nikita, the band’s singer, “‘cause we all have our own kind of struggle. It translates into our music.”

And isn’t that what all this music and all this partying is about? It’s all to be heard, to be seen. While it might sound a little corny, the tunes and the booze and the (very good) corn on the cobs at OAP are all designed and calibrated for a specific purpose: connection. This is the crux of OAP, the secret sauce that makes it as celebrated and anticipated as it is by the McGill student body.

This sentiment was echoed by almost everyone we talked to about OAP’s impact and legacy. “In the back of my mind, OAP was a sort of dream,” contemplates Gabriel Jon, a folk and R&B singer and McGill Engineering student. “It was a big step towards my goal of not overthinking things too much and just going for things that I want to do.” Similarly, GarageMDs comments, “There’s something special about seeing your friends and classmates cheering you on, creating moments that remind you we’re all in this journey together [...] that make this experience so meaningful.”

“Seeing the impact that [our performance] can have on people who come to the shows means the world to us,” relates The Howlin’ Gales, a country rock band from Toronto. In an increasingly divided world plagued by individualistic ideals, to be seen by your community and to have your voice not just heard but uplifted is perhaps what we all yearn for. The bond between a performer and their audience, therefore, is made all the more sacred, as the effort and love invested by a performer into their craft is rewarded by the energy they receive from their audience. “What I hope to gain is a deeper connection with that crowd, because they’re the true supporters, the ones who come alive no matter the circumstances,” puts Clément Gabriel.

Beyond this, there are also the little points of connection between patrons, which all OAP attendees can attest to. “It’s the one place where I’ll actually see all of my friends, who you can never really combine in one room all together at McGill,” explains Claire Levasseur, VP Services for the EUS. From chatting with



Photo courtesy of Isabelle Lim

strangers in the (more often than not) hours-long line to bumping into dear friends scattered across the field, the spatial configuration of OAP is one built for interaction. “I hope OAP is remembered like that, where you can meet new people from so many different types of programs, so many different places.”

And not just students! Karl, a security guard from OAP, recalls feeling heartened by the warmth students showed him in their brief interactions entering and exiting the venue. When checking McGill IDs, he recounts seeing a string of 6 people with the same birthday as him – Valentine’s Day, which he says is rare. “At events, people usually try to avoid talking to security,” he says, “but here, I get to interact with cool people, young people.”

Love it or hate it, OAP is a McGill cultural staple that is here to stay. While seemingly just a superficial student festival on the surface, OAP’s purpose is much deeper than that. As a critical facet of McGill culture, it weaves a golden tie between decades of McGill alumni all the way to the present, strengthening an already formidable bond that exists between us students. It promotes local and student artists, ensuring a steady stream of art in a world where creative is unfortunately deemed less productive and therefore less valuable. OAP also fosters inter-faculty and inter-cohort interaction and connection, ensuring that people get the opportunity to form new bonds and strengthen old ones. “We take a lot of pride in being able to put OAP on and create a space that so many people can enjoy, that connects everybody,” expresses Josh Negenman, the

other half of OAP’s head management duo.

So, OAP. You may or may not have attended, but you sure as hell have heard of it. In any case, it’s energetic and lively, with an atmosphere best described as electric – a buzz on your skin, a welcome high.

Is it really “The Best Place On Earth”? Nothing’s perfect, of course, but we’d say it comes pretty damn close.

**Discover Weekly (by the OAP Artists)**

**Clément Gabriel:** Remix of Moonlight (Andrea Oliva) - Clément Gabriel (unreleased)

**Dave & Sarah:** Wayside / Back In Time - Gillian Welch

**Dollhouse:** Where To Go - Dollhouse (releasing soon)

**Flying Dream:** Dreaming - Flying Dream

**Gabriel Jon:** Yellow - Coldplay

**GarageMDs:** Sex On Fire - Kings of Leon

**The Howlin’ Gales:** Whitehouse Road - Tyler Childers

**Mica:** Lady (Hear Me Tonight) - Modjo

**Nina Baby:** Where’s My Voice? - Mita Gami & EREZ (Samer Soltan Remix)

**Niney:** Two Months Off - Underworld

**Willy Nilly:** No Paradise - Willy Nilly (releasing soon)

# Just One More Episode

The Rise and Effects of Binge-Watching



**Julia Apitz-Grossman**  
Culture Contributor

**Nikhila Shanker** | Visuals Editor

It's happened to all of us. One episode turns into four, and before we realize it, the sun has set, the snacks are gone, and all that's left is Netflix's telling phrase, "Are you still watching?"

Binge-watching is defined by Merriam-Webster as, "watching multiple episodes of television in rapid succession." The practice has become an increasingly common pastime in recent years, which is unsurprising given that every new show seems to be more addictive than the last.

However, this hasn't always been the case. In fact, binge-watching is a relatively recent behavioural phenomenon — only seen commonly in the public since around 2013, when streaming services like Netflix boomed in popularity. Suddenly, people no longer needed to wait a week for the next episode or purchase individual box sets of DVDs, they could simply access them on these streaming sites packed with endless hours of entertainment. It was revolutionary for both the TV industry and its watchers. The COVID-19 pandemic only further increased streaming popularity, as people were suddenly stuck at home with

ample amounts of time and fewer ways to spend it. According to the National Library of Medicine, over 70 per cent of television watchers today consider binge-watching as normal practice.

So, why do we do it? Why is it so easy to be pulled in for hours to a good show? Well, when we watch TV, it is usually for enjoyment. After a long day of classes or work, our brains crave a break, and television provides us with instant gratification. When we are doing something that we enjoy, our brains release a chemical called dopamine, which promotes pleasure and happiness. This dopamine release makes us feel good and creates a rush similar to that of a drug, but on a smaller scale. That feeling is addictive, and our brains will crave more dopamine in order to keep feeling pleasure; a craving which can often be satiated by watching another episode.

That said, there is more to binge-watching than solely the scientific aspect. The social nature of TV plays a huge role in why people feel the need to binge, a factor that has only been amplified by social media. When new seasons of popular shows

come out, chatter on social media inevitably follows. For example, when the third season of *The Summer I Turned Pretty* began dropping weekly on Prime Video this summer, my Instagram and TikTok soon became flooded with funny or exciting reels related to the show. These videos quickly started online conversations and disputes such as whether people are "Team Jeremiah" or "Team Conrad," and created a sense of investment in a show that viewers may or may not have even previously watched themselves. I suddenly felt compelled to catch up on the new season so I could understand what people were talking about, and found myself bingeing four episodes in one evening. Whether fueled by a fear of missing out or a fear of having the plot spoiled for them, people feel the need to catch up on new shows so they can be part of these conversations. However, we must recognize that these conversations never influenced us in the same way before we had access to social media 24/7.

Others use binge-watching to escape reality and transport themselves into a different world

for as long as possible. The more time we spend with familiar TV characters, the more we begin to feel like we really know them. These characters start to feel like companions, and we become so invested in their stories that turning off the TV can make us feel lonely. Interestingly enough, bingeing doesn't only come with feel-good shows either. Shows that cause more negative feelings like anxiety or fear are often just as addicting, as they produce the same sense of escapism, if not one that is even more intense. This behaviour can even feed on itself, with people watching more in order to soothe the stressful feelings that bingeing caused in the first place.

Now that we know why this behaviour occurs, it's important to note the effects it might have on our bodies. While it is often used as a light-hearted term, binge-watching can be more serious than just a casual pastime. Similar to gambling, it can turn into a real behavioural addiction, which are accompanied by a lack of self-control, regret or guilt, and neglect of responsibilities. Additionally, avoiding real-life problems by watching hours of TV can lead to social isolation.

This is associated with depression and feelings of loneliness or guilt when the episodes are over. In regard to physical health, it is unsurprising that binge-watching goes hand-in-hand with a sedentary lifestyle, which is one of the most harmful things we can do for our bodies. Sitting and watching television for four hours or more per day can over time increase the risk of cardiovascular disease by 50 per cent compared to those who sit for two hours or less. Inactive sitting might be linked to a 25 per cent higher BMI index in young adults, which can lead to various serious health problems. Finally, binge-watching negatively affects our sleep. After watching hours of TV, our brains struggle to fully shut down, leading to poorer sleep quality, increased fatigue, and insomnia.

These are all very serious mental and physical effects. That being said, it is also important to note that staying up one night and watching a season of your favourite show with friends is not the end of the world. These effects result from repeated behaviour over time, so it is best to be mindful but not to stress too much.

For the reasons above or even for their own benefit, not every show releases all episodes at once on streaming services. Some, like *The Summer I Turned Pretty*, still follow the classic weekly schedule release in order to combat binge-watching and create suspense leading up to each episode. Similarly, *Love Island USA*, which captured millions of eyes this summer, released one episode per day, multiple times per week. This method can be very successful as it keeps people engaged in new drama and conversation while giving them something to look forward to. Even the busiest viewers are more likely to set aside an hour a day for a new episode than to commit to watching five in a row.

At its best, binge-watching offers us copious amounts of entertainment, an escape from reality, and a connection to a larger community around the world. At its worst, it can allow us to slip into unhealthy habits that leave us guilty, tired, or isolated. The key is to enjoy our favourite shows in moderation. Whether that means watching one episode per day to unwind or prepping for the occasional weekend marathon, we can keep the joy of television alive without creating a bad habit. After all, television should enhance our lives, not replace them.

# The Outrage Economy: Engineering Backlash

This summer's viral spectacles reveal who really shapes internet discourse

Anahi Pellathy  
Staff Writer

Over the course of the summer, we saw trends come and go, as they are wont to do. Somewhere between the fashion fads, viral recipes, and throwaway memes lay something trend-adjacent: talking points.

From Sydney Sweeney's jeans as a eugenics dog whistle to tradwife aesthetics permuted into "princess treatment," media discourses have felt inescapable, a beast of their own. They model a new format of engagement that has become increasingly common online, and spell a clear trend towards conservative cultural dominance.

This "discourse" is not a conversation en masse or a mesh of individual interactions. Rather, it consists of two clashing self-contained dialogues — and conservatives are setting the terms.

These media blackouts — instances where it seems the whole of the internet is shouting about the same thing to no avail — have become a strategic tool of the right to dismiss and delegitimize liberal critique. This successfully spews further division and paints liberals as fragile and perpetually outraged, lessening the credibility of the "woke left" that can no longer unite around a cohesive political agenda, whereas the right can and does.

The result? Conservatives are winning the media discourse.

Take the response to the Sydney Sweeney American Eagle ad. The infamous ad features the white, blonde, blue-eyed actress posing in a pair of AE jeans and slowly drawing that "genes ["jeans"] are passed down from offspring to offspring...my genes are blue" as the camera zooms in to her blue eyes. Tagline "Sydney Sweeney has great genes" feels loaded when the wordplay hinges on Sweeney's presentation of "desirable" white, blonde, blue-eyed genes.

Mass amounts of backlash circulated following its release, deeming it creepy at best and endorsing eugenics at worst. Then came the subsequent wave of reactions: a mass of comments, tweets, and posts saying people were reading too much into it, that American Eagle had just happened to pick a blonde, blue-eyed actress, that



Sydney Sweeney's ad displayed in stores in New York City.

— the dreaded phrase — "it's not that deep." That wave of dismissal fueled the discourse itself, and by insisting critics were overly sensitive, conservatives set the terms of debate and ensured the ad was replayed, argued over, and circulated even more widely.

Exploiting humankind's instinct towards the extreme is no novelty for social media creators. As actions once considered progressive are increasingly normalized, the countercultural alternative is radical conservatism in order to amass likes and views. Cue the rise of tradwife content: TikTok user Courtney Joelle's video, in which she describes refusing to even speak to a waiter before her husband arrives at the restaurant as "princess treatment," has a whopping 8.2 million views at the time of writing.

The "moment" here is not the video itself, but the reactions that have caused videos such as these to rack up millions of views and countless comments. Viewers either condemn or praise the creator's commitment to traditional values and

femininity. Extreme conservatism paired with a spectacle-driven algorithm is a recipe for engagement from hate-watchers and sympathizers alike. These seemingly random viral flare-ups are engineered to spark backlash, and the resulting liberal outrage becomes the fuel to boost conservative visibility and reach.

Amidst an atmosphere of outrage and radical extremes, conservative-coded imagery settles comfortably into the mainstream.

Audience engagement with each of the summer's spectacles indicate a pendulum swing away from the 2020 cancel culture era of "woke censorship," which pushed political correctness and positioned everyday people at the mercy of an internet mob. This was a time when it felt like the entire internet was against the same things, regardless of private, personal beliefs. Backlash was quickly quieted, and TikTok Trump supporters were no match for the crashing wave of the PC police. Framed as accountability, cancel culture instead stunted personal

growth, pushing people into silence out of fear of misstepping and setting the stage for today's post-cancel culture era.

Now, we're seeing the opposite: no one is afraid to say anything. Emboldened by Trump's unconventional approach to public speaking, a tone shift has taken place in American media that has been quickly exported worldwide. We are now in what some might describe as the post-cancel culture era.

Neither extreme is preferable, but it's important to notice how the tide has turned. Outrage-driven discourse online has shifted from a cultural tool for progressives to being strategically weaponized by the right. "Ragebait" content and its subsequent "it's not that deep" dismissals serve to delegitimize liberal voices and normalize conservative values in mainstream culture. If the summer's talking points can teach us anything, it is to recognize the patterns that keep us trapped in outrage cycles and note who really benefits from them.

Tagline  
"Sydney Sweeney has great genes" feels loaded when the wordplay hinges on Sweeney's presentation of "desirable" white, blonde, blue-eyed genes.

# The “McGillian Complex”: Pride or a Problem?



What McGill’s top spot says about student pride and the fine line between confidence and arrogance

**Lisa Banti**  
Staff Writer

When McGill was named the top university in Canada in this year’s QS World University Rankings released this June, the reaction from students was a mix of pride, shrugs, and a few smug grins. For some, it was validation — proof that the long nights at the Redpath library and the endless MyCourses submissions really are part of a top-tier institution. For others, it was just another label, another addition to McGill students’ already confident ego.

The so-called “McGillian complex” isn’t new. Ask anyone who has spent time at McGill, and they’ll likely tell you about the way students compare themselves — sometimes jokingly, sometimes seriously — to those at the University of Toronto, the University of British Columbia (UBC), and even our anglophone neighbours at Concordia. A new ranking only gives that culture further validation. A student, who chose to remain anonymous, said, “We already thought we were number one. Now it’s official.”

Rivalries between universities are nothing unusual. Harvard and Yale, Oxford and Cambridge; students have always measured their schools against others. But at McGill, that competitiveness sometimes

slips into something sharper. Comments like, “At least we didn’t end up at Concordia” or, “UBC is basically just McGill with better weather” aren’t hard to overhear in downtown Montreal cafés.

Platforms like Spotted: McGill show just how baked-in rivalry is to student culture. The page is essentially an anonymous confessions account on Instagram, with over 21,000 followers and more than 1,200 posts that capture the tone of campus life. Anonymous posts like, “Concordians infiltrating the confessions form yet again...” spark comments that are funny, casual, and full of that playful tension that makes the “McGillian complex” so visible in social media banter.

It isn’t only students who keep this rivalry alive. The university itself profits from it. Walk into the McGill Campus Store and you’ll find items that play up the hierarchy between schools like the McGill Pride Shot Glass, which ranks universities as if they were measurement lines, with Concordia at the bottom and McGill proudly at the top. By selling merchandise that turns competition into a joke, the administration reinforces the very culture of superiority that students are accused of carrying.

The new ranking risks amplifying these attitudes. While some students see the banter as harmless, others point out that these jokes feed into an

elitist culture. Concordia, for example, has a long history of excellence in creative fields, arts, and community-based programs — opportunities that McGill doesn’t necessarily have, such as a dedicated Visual Arts program. Reducing the success of a university to a punchline overlooks the complexity of the different factors that make universities thrive.

The real question is how should McGill students respond to this recognition. Pride doesn’t have to equal arrogance. Being proud of our institution’s reputation can coexist with respect for other schools. Yet too often, the McGill identity has leaned on dismissing others rather than building its own community culture.

One student, who wishes to remain anonymous, put it simply: “It’s nice to be at the top, but it feels like nothing on campus will change. We still struggle with the same issues as before.” Another noted that the ranking made them more conscious of how McGill is perceived outside Quebec: “It’s good for the brand, but it shouldn’t make us forget the cracks in the foundation.”

At the same time, it’s worth asking what exactly this number one title really means. Rankings like QS are based on metrics such as academic reputation, faculty-to-student ratios, and international outlook. They make for glossy headlines, but they

don’t magically fix the problems students within universities face every day. Tuition isn’t going down — it’s actually more than doubled in Canada since 2006. The shortage of advising appointments isn’t shrinking. The never-ending line at Redpath Café certainly isn’t disappearing.

What the ranking does change is perception, both externally and internally. Internationally, McGill now has another stamp of credibility to attract students and funding. On campus, it shapes how students talk about themselves, their degrees, and their job prospects. But perception alone doesn’t improve the lived experience of being here. That tension, between reputation and reality, is part of what fuels the “McGillian complex.”

So, what should McGill pride actually look like? Rankings like QS are based on metrics such as academic reputation, faculty-to-student ratios, and international outlook. They make for glossy headlines, but they don’t magically fix the problems students face every day. Tuition isn’t going down — it’s actually more than doubled in Canada since 2006. The shortage of advising appointments isn’t shrinking. The never-ending line at Redpath Café (and maybe Gerts) certainly isn’t disappearing.

Being ranked number one doesn’t guarantee that we’ll act like the number one community. It doesn’t erase elitism in student culture or solve

inequities in access to education. What it does offer is a chance to ask ourselves: are we living up to the title, or are we just polishing the ego of the “McGillian complex”?

If McGill students are serious about embracing this recognition, it might be worth stepping back from the rivalry game. Instead of measuring our success against the University of Toronto or UBC, we could focus on what actually makes this place worth being proud of. Is it the ranking, the diversity of students, the city we live in, or the communities we build on campus?

McGill’s new title is an opportunity not just to brag, but to rethink how we define excellence and honour. The ranking will eventually fade into next year’s cycle, but the culture we create around it is ours to decide. The “McGillian complex” doesn’t have to mean arrogance. It could mean something else entirely: a culture of confidence without condescension, and of pride without the put-downs. Maybe that’s the kind of number one reputation worth holding onto.



**AGA & Call for candidates**

All members of the Daily Publications Society (DPS), publisher of The McGill Daily and Le Débit, are cordially invited to its **Annual General Assembly:**

**Wednesday, October 1<sup>st</sup>  
@ 6:00PM**

**McGill University Centre,  
3480 Rue McTavish, Room 107**

The general assembly will elect the DPS Board of Directors for the 2025-2026 year.

DPS Directors meet at least once a month to discuss the management of both Le Débit and The McGill Daily and get to vote on important decisions related to the DPS’s activities.

The annual financial statements and the report of the public accountant are available at the office of the DPS and any member may, on request, obtain a copy free of charge.

Questions? Send email to: [chair@dailypublications.org](mailto:chair@dailypublications.org)



# Bring Back the Books

The consequences of moving books away from McGill libraries

**Justin Friedberg**  
Commentary Contributor

The sight of empty and disassembled bookshelves leaves me demoralized every time I climb McLennan Library's seemingly endless central staircase. The removal of 2.38 million books and other physical media from McGill's downtown campus represents a distressing overcorrection of the library's notorious lack of seating, threatening students' free and accessible access to information and turning our libraries into glorified internet cafes (minus the pastries and coffee).

The transfer of around 60 per cent of McGill's physical collection to an automated 4,200 square metre off-site facility was carried out alongside the ambitious Fiat Lux Project, which aimed to "create a new central Library complex dramatically reconfigured to suit modern users." Announced in 2019 as part of the bicentennial 'Master Plan' to wholly revitalize McGill's campuses, Fiat Lux promised to "more than double available seating" in a newly incorporated McLennan-Redpath Library.

But Fiat Lux — Latin for 'let

there be light' — was prematurely snuffed out when McGill President and Vice-Chancellor Deep Saini announced, in a September 2024 Senate meeting, that the administration had reached the "painful decision" to suspend the \$33 million project. Saini attributed recent project cuts, including the termination of Fiat Lux, to the Quebec government's decision to significantly increase tuition for out-of-province students. This decision has decreased overall enrollment revenue and helped balloon the university's deficit, from a projected \$15 million in the 2025 fiscal year to a staggering projected \$45 million in the 2026 fiscal year. In early February of this year, McGill released a statement tersely reflecting on the Quebec government's actions: "It has taken more than two centuries to build this world-renowned university, but just over a year for these decisions to harm it deeply."

During the aforementioned Senate meeting, McGill Librarian and Senator David Greene inquired whether or not the Fiat Lux project was "suspended permanently, or if there was an intention to resume it in the future." The

question was met by a resounding shrug, with Senator Fabrice Labeau responding that "the University would continue exploring options for how to best utilize available space to meet the evolving needs of students and other library users, though there was no timeline for these efforts." With plans on hold indefinitely, when will the 400,000 books planned for return to a renovated McLennan-Redpath complex be sent back? It doesn't take a keen eye to see that there aren't 4,000 books in McLennan, let alone 400,000.

What we're left with are the remnants of an unfinished vision. Walking slowly down corridors of empty white bookcases as the tube lights above me eerily flicker to life, a sense of loss pervades my thoughts. Not only because the fluorescent blinking reminds me of a haunted house, but because technology continues to push the physical medium towards obsolescence. I've been asking myself: "What is a library without books?" It's a community centre or study hall, but no longer a library. Those naked shelves stand as monuments to a dying age. The physical book had a good run of over 4,000 years anyway, right?

But with threats to internet access, the physical book may be more essential now than ever

before. I recently finished reading the book *Apple in China* by Patrick McGee, chronicling the fascinating and alarming story of how China allowed for the rise of Apple and, perhaps more importantly, how Apple played a pivotal role in the rise of China as the world's manufacturer. While reading the book, I learned about the erection of China's so-called 'Great Firewall,' which limits and surveils their citizen's internet access, and Apple's surrender to the whims of that same authoritarian police state: "...when Beijing called for virtual private networks to be removed from the China App Store, Apple complied, and 674 VPN apps were deleted. This was a massive concession, placing all iPhone users in the country in a splintered-off version of the internet" (298). The playbook is clear: limiting information limits resistance. The internet is not as secure as some believe it to be, even from the institutions we trust with our personal data.

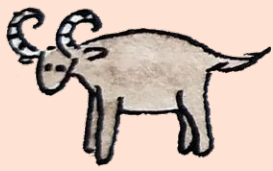
You may say this repression of free speech can't happen here, but take it from an American abroad: it could. The rise of an anti-informational age at home following the re-election of President Donald Trump, along with increasing book-bans across the country, means that free and easy access to university libraries and their physical contents

should be enthusiastically protected. I agree that ample space must be made in our libraries for students, but when does principle overtake practicality? In a world on a collision course with AI, reliable information is soon to become an even more valuable commodity than it already is. Though Fiat Lux was not unreasonable for its promise of increased space, the removal of nearly 2.5 million books from the immediate access of McGill students is a distressing overreach that is only underscored by the project's failure to proceed.

I came to McGill in 2023, and was one of the last to see the Library before its hollowing. I remember my neck hurting from walking up and down the aisles, stunned at the sheer size of McGill's collection and proud to be a student here. In the free time that a freshman had, which was plenty, I would sit down and flip through whatever interested me. I miss that.

Though a sleek remodelling is worthwhile in theory, the Fiat Lux approach to separating libraries from their books removes from libraries their very souls. Books are as much a symbol of the appreciation of knowledge as they are an instrument to enhance understanding. A library without its books is a car without wheels: you can sit down, but it won't take you far.

# MAJORS HOROSCOPES



**ARIES**  
(MAR 21 -  
APR 19)

YOU' RE A POLI SCI MAJOR  
LOOKING FOR AN INTERNSHIP.



**TAURUS**  
(APR 20 -  
MAY 20)

YOU' RE AN ENVIRONMENTAL  
SCIENCE MAJOR WHO HUGS  
TREES.



**GEMINI**  
(MAY 21 -  
JUN 20)

YOU' RE A BUSINESS MAJOR  
WHO SPENDS ALL DAY ON  
LINKEDIN.



**CANCER**  
(JUN 21 -  
JUL 22)

YOU' RE AN ENGLISH LIT MAJOR  
WHO' S HAD ENOUGH OF 17TH  
CENTURY ROMANCES.



**LEO**  
(JUL 23 -  
AUG 22)

YOU' RE AN INTERNATIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT MAJOR AND YOU  
DON' T KNOW HOW TO USE A  
HAMMER.



**VIRGO**  
(AUG 23 -  
SEPT 22)

YOU' RE AN ENGINEERING  
MAJOR AND YOU THINK PI IS  
THREE.



**LIBRA**  
(SEPT 23 -  
OCT 22)

YOU' RE A PHYSICS MAJOR WHO  
CAN' T REPLACE A LIGHTBULB.



**SCORPIO**  
(OCT 23 -  
NOV 21)

YOU' RE A SOCIOLOGY MAJOR,  
AND YOU GO "MHM. SOCIETY."



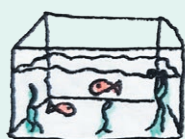
**SAGITTARIUS**  
(NOV 22 -  
DEC 21)

YOU' RE A PSYCHOLOGY MAJOR  
AND YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHAT  
THE BRAIN IS.



**CAPRICORN**  
(DEC 22 -  
JAN 19)

YOU' RE A BIOLOGY MAJOR AND  
YOUR HANDS ARE RUINED FROM  
FORMALDEHYDE.



**AQUARIUS**  
(JAN 20 -  
FEB 18)

YOU' RE A CLASSICS MAJOR  
BEFORE THE INVENTION OF THE  
TIME MACHINE.



**PISCES**  
(FEB 19 -  
MAR 20)

YOU' RE AN EDUCATION MAJOR  
BUT YOU' RE THE ONE BEING  
EDUCATED (?)