

## Not enough nooks and crannies

Libraries filled with too many distractions, not helpful to students studying for exams



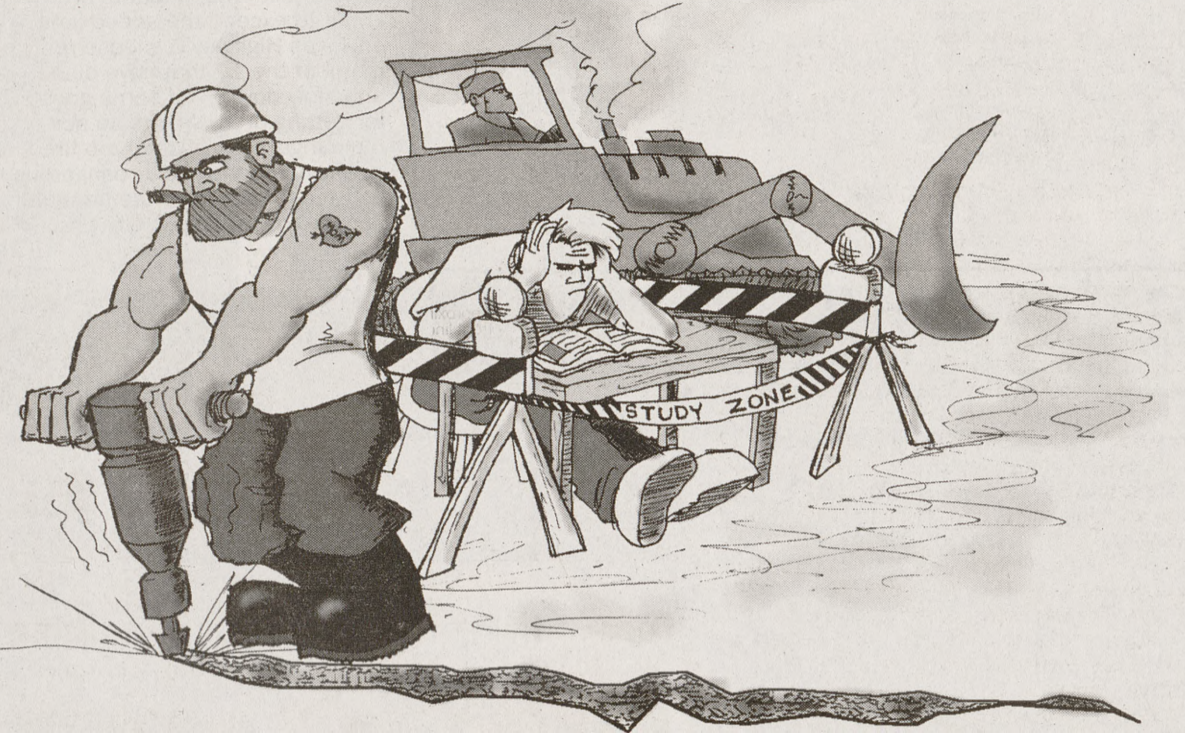
ELIZABETH KOHL

With finals on the horizon, students will be pulling out of Woodwork for places to study for exams. As if the libraries on campus not always overrun during final construction now pollutes potential study nooks. Members of the Texas A&M staff can testify to the influx of students that inevitably ensues during finals. Libraries are equipped with tables, cubicles and private rooms designated for studying purposes, but year, two of the major A&M met government hardy seem prepared to handle individuals looking for a place to study. The West Campus Library is a perfect example of corrupted space. As a newer facility, this library gives excessive traffic during library weeks. And while during the day the men confessed to be predominantly in and out of the computer lab, there are a number of students studying in above floors all day and even into the night. One would assume from its name that the West Campus Library was designed specifically for studying purposes. On the first floor, conveniently located with a computer center, scan documents, check email and type anything from memos to computer programs. Sprinkled with a few shelves of business and agricultural documents, the always-silent second floor also houses 50 tables and a number of cubicles. But surely, the top floor of the West Campus Library was designed with studying exclusively in mind. There are no books on the third floor; instead, more than 25 tables are strewn about surrounded by rows and rows of spacious cubicles.

### Campus is not prepared to accommodate studying for finals.

Elsewhere under the sterile lighting, octets of slightly cushy, doctors' office-like chairs are available, and several private rooms can be checked out for group study. But despite the conspicuous fact that most individuals venture to a library such as this, nearly all of the cubicles on the third floor are filled with intrusive, sluggish computers which fill the air with perpetual key tapping. More than 100 of these machines were displaced from the

Biology lab to the library toward the end of the summer. There were just a few at first, but within weeks, nearly every cubicle on the third floor was filled and the study space ravaged. The purpose of moving so many computers into the library was to maintain the number of computers available to students on West Campus. The installment, however, has transformed the library into a giant, inefficient computer lab. Keystrokes, beeps and the continuous hum of hard drives defiling the concentration of those trying to study aside, the larger problem lies in the space the machines now occupy. Throughout the course of a typical week, the West Campus Library is noticeably busy. Tables are scarce, and cubicles without computers quickly become occupied. Even an amoeba would have the forethought to realize the computers are a distraction from the true purpose of a library. Despite the inconveniences sure to surface in the next couple of days, the computers are scheduled to remain indefinitely. Surely, the administration does not believe the overflow will lead to the Sterling C. Evans Library, with its shag carpeting, retro furniture and musky smell. Although students may flock to Evans for its familiar ambience, the sounds of hammers and drills leave little to be desired. Rest assured — the crews



GABRIEL RUENES/THE BATTALION

working to repair Evans are aware that finals are forthcoming, and they will do all in their power to muffle the pounding and banging. In the unfortunate event that one has not yet found a place to study, the Sterling C. Evans Library Annex is just a catwalk

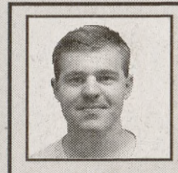
away. Sure, there are few tables and chairs about, but if students want private study rooms, they may call the library ahead of time and reserve them. Truth be told, the campus has only semi-adequate facilities available and is not prepared to handle the number of students

planning to study for finals. Winter break is just around the corner. Perhaps the University should use the time before finals week to move computers and finish construction.

Elizabeth Kohl is a junior accounting major.

## Presidential candidates fall short in Republican debate

Last Thursday was a tough day. After a day filled with exams that hit a person harder than Jay Brooks hit Chris Simms, another task was still to be faced in the evening.



MARK PASSWATERS

That mission: to sit down and watch the Republican presidential candidates debate in New Hampshire. Which was more painful, the exams or the debate, is still under discussion. The format of the debate was such that the candidates were never really forced to confront major issues; the questions were softballs and each candidate seemed more interested in trying to buck the public's qualms about their character than talking about the future of the nation. At least there was a remote control to turn off the program. After receiving a nightly dose of "JAG," this intrepid columnist grabbed a pad of paper, turned to Fox News and prepared to find out all sorts of interesting things about the GOP's picks for the presidency.

The following are my impressions of the participants' quotes: "Hi, I'm Brit Hume. Many of you remember when I had a career back at ABC. Now I am a commentator at Fox News. Yes, there is such a thing. My job is to throw up more softballs than Steve Trachsel. Let's meet our candidates."

"I'm Sen. John McCain from Arizona. Many people think that I have a problem with my temper. I don't. I'm a funny guy. Can't you see that? I'm talking to you! You better listen to me!" "I'm Steve Forbes. I want you all to know one thing: Anything George W. Bush says, I'm against. So there."

"I'm George W. Bush. I'm governor of Texas — a state that if it were its own nation would have the 11th largest economy on earth. I know how to lead. I also know I'm winning, so I'm not saying anything." "I'm Alan Keyes. If you're against me, you're racist."

The remaining two candidates, social activist Gary Bauer and Sen. Orrin Hatch of Utah, had opening comments as well. But the channel had miraculously turned to ESPN. Thursday night football — what a concept! Go Jags!

Wait, this is not good reporting. Let's go back to Fox News, where things were attempting to get interesting. McCain still was trying to convince people he was funny. The problem is that he could not even convince himself.

Forbes was sporting a strange look, like he was a kid in a candy store. Then again, he probably owns the candy store. In any event, Forbes was still intent on showing that he was the "Anti-Bush." Bush, in the meantime, was still governor

of Texas, which if it stood alone, would have the 11th largest economy...

Keyes was making himself out to be the political Dick Vitale. He waved his arms, yelled and said nothing. Get this man a telestrator!

Who is Bauer, and what does he stand for? Oh, he opposes to abortion. What else? He opposes abortion.

Hatch stands up straighter than any other human being. Much like a droid — no, wait, that would be Gore.

Will someone answer a question with a specific answer? Click. On to the next channel. James Bond marathon on TBS! Yes! *The Spy Who Loved Me*. Seen it 25 times. Back to the debate.

McCain said something funny. He wants to prop up fed chairman Alan Greenspan with a board and a pair of dark sunglasses when he dies, like *Weekend at Bernie's*.

Bush still knows how to lead and is the governor of the second largest state with the 11th largest economy...

**Hopefully, there will be debates where real issues are not only placed on the table but actually are addressed by each candidate.**

Forbes still has not answered a question, but he has answered several of Bush's.

The general idea of a debate is for candidates to be confronted on issues of consequence to America's future.

This concept, which gives candidates one minute to talk and no chance for rebuttal, eliminates that possibility.

Even if the format were changed and Hume had been allowed to ask some of the hard questions he is known for, each candidate seemed more interested in primping for the camera than taking a stand.

There are still two more months before voters go to the polls in the first primary, so there is still time for things to improve.

Hopefully, there will be more debates in which real issues are not only placed on the table but actually are addressed by each of the candidates. In the meantime, America breathlessly awaits the showdown between Democrats Al Gore and Bill Bradley.

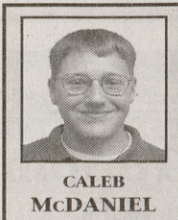
Click.

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MIKE LUCKOVICH ATLANTA CONSTITUTION

## Searching for something worth saying



CALEB MCDANIEL

What good can a newspaper do? Such a question may seem ridiculously big-headed to readers of a paper. Journalists are aware that to some people, their work is little more than something to pass the time while at a bus stop or before a class. Those with such a casual relationship with newspapers may think existential questions about the value of words hardly worth asking. But permit me a moment of musing. After working as the editor of this page during the summer and fall semesters, the question of what my job is worth is more than just a passing curiosity. It is a practical concern. And being faced with the daily job of filling a blank page with text is bound to make an editor think about why words matter.

My answer to that question, advisedly, is that words do and do not matter. (Yes, I'm a liberal arts major.) In one sense, they do not matter because words are cheap. It costs nothing to write a column, and believe me, it pays only a little more than it costs. But it takes almost Herculean ability to live up to what you say, to practice what you preach and to believe truly what you purport to believe. Mouths open more easily than minds.

On the other hand, it is because actions speak louder than words that words are important after all. Words, ideally, inspire people to do something. If a column has

done little more than spark more words and discussions, it has at least made people think.

Some writers, doubtlessly trying to justify their existence, have said that the important thing about words is that they are said. I disagree. The important thing about words is that they are read. Writers who think for more than a second about themselves realize they do not have all the right things to say. They are just the ones with the column space. They write not because they have the final word on the matter, but because they have the beginning word. The job of a newspaper is to start a conversation, not to end one.

When I think of words that way, I have hope that columns are not meaningless in the face of tragedies, crises or intractable problems. After returning from the Bonfire site, I made the mistake of thinking all I had to give was words.

But the words on this page are not the finished product. They are a means to an end. The goal of this section is not so much to talk, as it is to make others talk.

And while one person speaking alone may seldom rise above the volume of a whisper, the din of conversation is the music that matters. Add your voice to mine, and then together we may find something worth saying.

Caleb McDaniel is a junior history major.

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