

Literature

The Literature faculty at MIT performs a challenging balancing act. We conduct mainly small, seminar-style classes that afford undergraduate students direct and continual interaction with full faculty members—an important contribution to MIT’s curriculum and an approach to undergraduate education one might expect to find at leading liberal arts colleges such as Williams or Amherst. We are also committed to hiring and promoting from within our ranks faculty whose scholarship can compete with that carried out in leading PhD-granting departments of English, such as Berkeley, Stanford, or Harvard, where graduate-level teaching takes precedence over undergraduate.

Our faculty are expected to sustain excellent records of scholarly productivity while lacking the stimulus of a graduate program and while devoting a considerable amount of their effort to general undergraduate education. We teach about one quarter of MIT’s undergraduate student body each year, and all faculty members, regardless of rank, spend one-half of their teaching loads on introductory subjects that participate in MIT’s General Institute Requirements. But we also deliver a top-quality major to those who choose to pursue it; over the past several years we have sent literature majors to graduate programs in English at such leading institutions as Berkeley, Stanford, Cambridge, Yale, the University of Chicago, and the University of California, Los Angeles.

Our balancing act calls for agility in shifting our mode of approach to our subject, from a generally accessible idiom to the most rigorously professional one. We welcome this challenge, believing that our discipline needs to maintain its ties to broad extra-professional audiences, and also that the extra-professional public can benefit from exposure to the knowledge and skills our discipline deploys. We help students become familiar with the traditions out of which the expressive culture of our own time has evolved, and also to develop the crucial skills of verbal and situational interpretation that they will draw upon in later life as citizens and professionals. What might at first appear to be our peculiar position vis-à-vis *both* MIT and our own discipline may in fact be a position of flexibility and strength from which MIT Literature, along with other Humanities units at the Institute, may exercise national and international leadership.

Overview of Academic Year 2009

Literature faculty members enjoyed another productive and positive year, in spite of challenges presented by the economic downturn and by the decisions of two of our faculty to accept positions elsewhere. Research initiatives were undertaken, expanded, and refined by several members. Numerous publications appeared in books and scholarly journals; teaching performance continued to be high and some new classes were launched or are in the planning stages; our members gave numerous lectures, spreading the fruits of their research at locations around the world, and outreach efforts continued, though on a somewhat more modest scale.

Among the highlights of our year was the selection of Diana Henderson as our fourth MacVicar Faculty Fellow; Sandy Alexandre’s prestigious fellowship at Brown University’s Pembroke Center; Alisa Braithwaite’s selection for the Woodrow Wilson

Foundation's Junior Faculty Career Enhancement Fellowship for AY2010; the expansion of Peter Donaldson's world-renowned Shakespeare Archive into a new Global Shakespeare project; successful recruitment of Ricardo Pitts-Wiley as a Martin Luther King, Jr. visiting scholar for AY2010; the dean's selection of Joel Burges as a Mellon postdoctoral fellow in literature for AY2010; and the successful promotion to the rank of associate professor without tenure of Sarah Brouillette (who then unfortunately decided to leave MIT for Carleton University in Ottawa, where her husband is on the faculty.)

Apart from Brouillette, we also lost our colleague Henry Jenkins this year, when Jenkins decided to accept a remarkable offer from the University of Southern California. Both Jenkins and Brouillette were important figures to the current and future condition of the Comparative Media Studies (CMS) program, so their losses will present a particular challenge. We look forward to working with colleagues in neighboring disciplines to rebuild media studies at MIT and are already well into planning to hire replacements for these two scholars in fall 2009. A short-term solution to Brouillette's and Jenkins' departures was our hiring of John Picker, formerly of Harvard University, on a one-year appointment as visiting associate professor in literature and comparative media studies for AY2010.

As a unit, we enjoyed a high level of collegiality and made group decisions effectively. We pride ourselves on having built a faculty in which every member, including the most junior, can participate fully in collective deliberations. We are proud of and committed to the model of hiring new faculty with the intention of promoting them, and of giving them all the support they need to meet the Institute's promotion standards. We adhere to the principle that the vast majority of our teaching should be done by regular tenure-line faculty.

New Developments and Ongoing Efforts

We made no new tenure-line hires this past year and had no retirements. One support staff change did occur: Jo Choi, a full-time administrative assistant, resigned and, as part of our cost-cutting efforts we redistributed responsibilities among the current staff. Administrative officer Jackie Breen and staff members Jamie Graham (now full-time) and Kevin McLellan (half-time) are all performing excellently and work well together.

Our maturing junior faculty members Alexandre, Braithwaite, and Bahr continued to enrich our contribution to MIT and the profession. Notably, Alexandre and Braithwaite are both collaborators in an exciting new interdisciplinary subject, 21A.114J *Black Matters*, to be launched this coming academic year, and Bahr was instrumental in the planning and launch of the new interdisciplinary Ancient and Medieval Studies program. This year was also the first in which we enjoyed the presence of Noel Jackson in the ranks of our tenured faculty, and we thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to observe how right the decision to tenure him had been. Jackson has long been a valued voice in our collective deliberations; this year he assumed the chairmanship of our Curriculum Committee; he will be a real leader for our program in years to come.

We continued our efforts to increase the visibility of literature and the humanities at MIT, though on a reduced scale. Our weekly literature teas represented an extremely

cost-effective way to build a community of students, faculty, and staff interested in literature on this campus. These gatherings provided an important resource for a growing number of our undergraduates. We also continued to sponsor the MIT Literary Society and visits of noted authors to campus. This past year we sponsored a visit by the novelist M.G. Vassanji, but we anticipate that in these challenging times we will probably have to put plans for an ongoing visiting authors series on hiatus for the foreseeable future. We remain committed, however, to the idea of such a series, possibly sponsored in partnership with the programs in Writing and Humanistic Studies, and Foreign Languages and Literatures. MIT's Council for the Arts, which along with other groups on campus has helped support our efforts so far, has warned us not to expect funding on a predictable, recurring basis. Since our aim is to gain and hold recognition, we feel that sporadic events, supported by one-off grants, will not suffice.

Faculty achievements in research, teaching, and service will be discussed in the appropriate sections of this document. William Uricchio addresses developments particular to CMS in that report.

Research and Publication

MIT Literature faculty members produced significant new publications during the past academic year. Mary Fuller published two new books, *Remembering the Early Modern Voyage: English Narratives in the Age of European Expansion* and her translation of Kisshomaru Ueshiba's *A Life In Aikido: The Biography Of Founder Morihei Ueshiba*. John Hildebidle brought out *Signs, Translations*, a new collection of poems. William Uricchio's edited volume *We Europeans? Media, Representations, Identity* was published by the University of Chicago Press. Sandy Alexandre published two articles in scholarly journals, one in a special issue of *Mississippi Quarterly: The Journal of Southern Cultures* on lynching and American culture (the subject of Alexandre's first book manuscript under review at Oxford University Press), another on playwright August Wilson in *Modern Drama*. Sarah Brouillette wrote three new articles and has several reviews forthcoming in journals ranging from *Textual Practice* to the *Irish Review*. James Buzard's new essay on Dickens's *The Old Curiosity Shop* appeared in both the *Dickens Studies Annual* and in a collection of essays titled *Contemporary Dickens*. Peter Donaldson continued his pathbreaking work on Shakespeare in performance in essays in *Shakespeare, Shakespeare Survey*, and the new Norton Critical Edition of *Richard III*. Mary Fuller expanded her work on Early Modern travel in essays published in the new Blackwell's *Companion to the Global Renaissance* and in a volume of critical essays titled *Empire, Form, and Travel Writing: The Poetics and Politics of Mobility*, brought out by Routledge. Diana Henderson prepared three new essays shortly to be published in edited collections or journals; in addition to work in her area of scholarly specialization, she will publish "Re-contextualizing Literary Education: A Multi-Variable Experiment in Learning and Performance" a reflection on her recent teaching experiment with MIT colleague Janet Sonenberg, in *English Language Notes*. Noel Jackson's essay "Rhyme and Reason: Erasmus Darwin's Romanticism" appeared in the distinguished journal *Modern Language Quarterly*. Wyn Kelley's "'Writ in Water': The Books of *Moby-Dick*" was accepted for the influential *Blackwell Companion to the American Novel*. Shankar Raman continued work on a coedited collection called *Knowing Shakespeare: Cognition, Embodiment, and the*

Senses, which features his essay “Hamlet in Motion.” He is writing a book for Edinburgh University Press on *Postcolonial Studies and Renaissance Literatures*; and another titled *Before the Two Cultures: Literature and Mathematics in Early Modern Europe*. Two articles derived from this latter project have already been published in edited collections of critical essays. Stephen Tapscott published “Fidelity,” an essay on lyricism and translation, in the *Opera News*. Literature faculty members also published a number of reviews of current work in leading academic journals.

In addition to individual scholarly achievements, some members of our faculty have been engaged in collaborative research projects, most notably Peter Donaldson’s continuing and pioneering work on the Shakespeare Electronic Archive, which entered a new phase of expansion. With numerous partners at MIT and around the world, Global Shakespeare is both a curricular and a research initiative aimed at studying the rich two-way and multi-centered cultural interactions taking place around the staging of Shakespeare’s work that are changing how Shakespeare is understood and the ways in which classic dramatic texts participate in the emergence of new forms. Donaldson also continues his work on his Cross-Media Annotation System, enabling new depth in the teaching and study of film and media. Also noteworthy was Diana Henderson’s involvement with the theatrical production *The Tragedy of Thomas Hobbes*, staged by the Royal Shakespeare Company late in 2008. This play was commissioned and developed through the d’Arbeloff- and other grant-supported team-taught class Henderson conducted with Janet Sonenberg, 21L.016 Learning from the Past: Drama, Science, Performance. Material from the 2005 iteration of the class was used in the playscript. James Buzard continued work this year on the Serial Experience, a Hyperstudio project designed to represent and make digitally available a broad collection of materials pertaining to the serial publication of fiction in Victorian England. The project applied for funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Wyn Kelley continued her collaboration with CMS’s New Media Literacies Project, coauthoring the Teachers’ Strategy Guide for Reading in a Participatory Culture and taking part in workshops with teachers on the guide. Finally, Shankar Raman continued his involvement in the five-year Making Publics project, an interdisciplinary group investigating the formation of audiences for culture and science in 16th- and 17th-century Europe, funded by the Social Sciences Research Council of Canada.

Fellowships and Awards

In addition to the MacVicar Faculty Fellowship to Diana Henderson and the fellowships granted to Sandy Alexandre and Alisa Braithwaite mentioned above, grants and awards made to Literature faculty members Shankar Raman, Stephen Tapscott, and William Uricchio should also be mentioned. Raman was awarded a three-month fellowship for research at the Folger Library in Washington, DC. Tapscott won a Witter-Bynner Foundation grant for poetry, and spent periods of last year in residence at the Santa Fe Art Institute, the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, and Balliol College, Oxford, in connection with the MIT-Balliol exchange program. Uricchio was named Bonnier visiting professor in journalism, media, and communication at Stockholm University in Sweden.

Lectures and Appearances

Literature faculty members presented their ongoing scholarly work at numerous conferences and in many locations during the year.

James Buzard gave keynote lectures on aspects of his work on the history and representation of travel and on the 19th-century British novel in Uruguay, Mumbai, Venice, Melbourne, Seattle, and Santa Cruz. He also spoke on panels at conferences in London and Jerusalem, and was interviewed on the National Public Radio program Studio 360 about his work on the revolving door. Mary Fuller delivered a keynote address at a conference on Richard Hakluyt held at the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, England. She also spoke at meetings of the Congrès national des sociétés historiques et scientifiques in Québec and the Colonial Society of Massachusetts. Noel Jackson received the distinction of being invited to conduct a seminar on his ongoing work at the annual conference of the North American Society for the Study of Romanticism. He was also invited to take part in roundtables at the same conference and at a meeting of the graduate colloquium, the Long Eighteenth Century and Romanticism, at Harvard University. His other lectures included “Rhyme and Reason: Erasmus Darwin’s Epicurean Poetics,” at the annual conference of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies, and “Wordsworth’s Imagism and the Rhetoric of Condensation” at the Wordsworth Summer Conference in Grasmere, England. Ruth Perry continued to present her research on the culture of balladry in the Enlightenment in invited lectures at the Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities, Edinburgh; the Graduate Center of the City University of New York; the International Symposium on Britain and Italy in the Long Eighteenth Century in Anacapri, Italy; a conference of the Eighteenth-Century Society for Scottish Studies in Saint Andrews, Scotland, and a conference of the Jane Austen Society of America in Philadelphia. Sandy Alexandre spoke about her work on lynching at the annual American Literature Association conference; Alisa Braithwaite lectured on Caribbean women writers at a conference at Barnard College; Sarah Brouillette spoke at conferences in Toronto, Oregon, Ottawa, San Francisco, New York, and Stirling, Scotland. Peter Donaldson gave lectures at the annual meetings of the Shakespeare Association of America in both 2008 and 2009, in addition to the Modern Language Association convention in San Francisco. He also participated, at Dean Fitzgerald’s invitation, in a digital humanities workshop at MIT. Diana Henderson lectured at the International Shakespeare Conference in Stratford-upon-Avon, England. Wyn Kelley gave talks on Herman Melville, 19th-century American literature, and ecocriticism in Beijing, the Galapagos, San Francisco, New Bedford, Tahiti, and Jerusalem. Shankar Raman spoke at the meeting of the Shakespeare Association of America and at the Royal Shakespeare Company’s summer school.

Teaching and Curricular Innovation

As mentioned above, a highlight of our year was the selection of Diana Henderson as a MacVicar Faculty Fellow, which brought our current total of MacVicar Fellows to four, almost a quarter of our total population. Henderson has long been recognized as a marvelous instructor, a great mentor to undergraduates, and a genuine pedagogical innovator. Beyond Henderson’s fellowship, Henderson and Hildebidle were the most recent recipients of Institute awards for contributions to the undergraduate curriculum.

Several faculty members play crucial roles in staffing CMS subjects and subjects in the program in Women's and Gender Studies (WSG).

MIT Literature has a strong tradition of excellent classroom instruction. Our faculty routinely receive high marks on student evaluations (at last count, over 6.4 out of 7 for overall rating of teaching and over 6.2 for overall rating of subject). We thrive on small classes that offer students frequent opportunity to take an active role in the learning process. Each year, we teach about one quarter of MIT's entire student body, two-thirds of these in classes that carry credit toward MIT's General Institute Requirements. We teach a large number of communication-intensive subjects and devote considerable effort to the improvement of students' skills in writing and speaking, not only in class but in grading written work and in one-on-one meetings with students. We are deeply committed to the goal of helping MIT's students become more articulate, better informed, and more critically alert professionals and citizens.

As a group, we frequently reexamine our curriculum and look for ways to enrich it, keep it up to date, and contribute to MIT's institutional mission. Toward these ends, and because of revisions to the HASS portion of the GIRs approved by the faculty in the spring, we held a one-day retreat in May and arrived at several recommended revisions now being implemented. We look, in particular, for interdisciplinary teaching partnerships, both in our school and across the Institute. Some of these now being conducted are the new 21A.114J Black Matters class, in which Sandy Alexandre and Alisa Braithwaite are actively involved; Diana Henderson's 21L.016 Learning from the Past: Drama, Science, Performance, co-taught with Janet Sonenberg; and 21L.017 The Art of the Probable: Literature and Probability, currently taught by Shankar Raman, Alvin Kibel, and Noel Jackson and featuring visiting talks by members of the Course 6 faculty and others. Wyn Kelley and John Hildebidle co-taught with Jeremy Wolfe in the Concourse program. Arthur Bahr's collaboration in the design of a new interdisciplinary program in Ancient and Medieval Studies has already been noted. Mary Fuller worked with Alisa Braithwaite and Sarah Brouillette on a revamped introductory 21L.007 World Literatures subject, and beyond the Literature faculty's borders joined colleagues from Anthropology and Music and Theater Arts in a new class 21A.113J The Supernatural in Music, Literature and Culture, and will soon offer a new freshman seminar on scientific expeditions and the representation of discovery with a colleague from Earth, Atmospheric, and Planetary Sciences. James Buzard continued to collaborate with Mark Jarzombek of the School of Architecture and Urban Planning on a new introductory subject on the concept of modernity.

Beyond the Institute, Ruth Perry offered graduate-level instruction, as a founding member of the Graduate Consortium in Women's Studies, an interdisciplinary program involving students from numerous Boston-area colleges and universities. Buzard frequently teaches an intensive summer seminar for the Dickens Project at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Thorburn's 24-lecture class "Masterworks of Early 20th-Century Literature," aimed at the general public, was released last year by the Teaching Company of Chantilly, Virginia. In the area of new pedagogic technologies, Donaldson's Cross-Media Annotation System continued to be used as a resource for undergraduate and graduate teaching at an increasing number of institutions in the US and abroad.

Professional Service

Our department members continue to perform a wide variety of professional roles, serving, for example, as executive committee members, delegates, chairs of ongoing seminars, advisory board members, manuscript reviewers for presses, outside readers of PhD dissertations, doctoral defense examiners, and outside referees in tenure and promotion cases.

For the Modern Language Association, literature's major professional organization, Brouillette is a member of the executive committee for the discussion group on bibliography and textual studies, and Buzard is an assembly delegate for the division on anthropological approaches to literature. Buzard and Henderson cochair ongoing seminars at the Harvard Humanities Center, where they interact regularly with visiting speakers and area graduate students. Our faculty members serve on the editorial or advisory boards of such leading journals as *English Literary History*, *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, *Journeys: The International Journal of Travel and Travel Writing*, *Studies in Travel Writing*, and *Shakespeare*; this past year they reviewed work submitted to those journals and to the *Journal of American Studies*, *Literature Compass*, the *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, the *Journal of Early Modern Cultural Studies*, and the *Publication of the Modern Language Association*. Younger faculty members such as Alexandre, Brouillette, and Jackson performed some of this reviewing work. We reviewed book manuscripts submitted to several university presses and served as external referees in promotion cases at a number of universities. Mary Fuller organized the research seminar Reading Voyages and Travels for the Shakespeare Association of America, and Diana Henderson was program chair for the same group's annual meeting of some 900 scholars. She also served on the association's board of trustees. Buzard continued his association with the Dickens Project, based at the University of California at Santa Cruz, lecturing and conducting a graduate seminar at its annual conference.

Service at MIT

MIT Literature is distinguished by its members' extensive service within the Institute, much of it focused on curricular development. The real leader here is Diana Henderson, currently dean for curriculum and faculty support in the Office of the Dean for Undergraduate Education. In this capacity, Henderson served, ex officio, on the Committee for the Undergraduate Program, the Subcommittee on the Communication Requirement, and the Educational Commons Subcommittee. This past year she was also a member of the School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Science's Education Committee, the MIT Council on Educational Technology, and the Creative Arts Council. She also took part in the operations of the Graduate Consortium in Women's Studies, CMS, and WSG.

During the past year Shankar Raman was on the Committee on Foreign Scholarships, the MIT-India Working Group, and the I-House Advisory Council. He also directed the Kelly-Douglas Fund. Within the Literature faculty itself, he continued to be an energetic and innovative leader, especially on curricular matters. Peter Donaldson served on the MIT Council on Educational Technology, the MIT Working Group on Information Technology, the CMS Curriculum Committee, and the Dean's Committee on CMS; he was also faculty advisor to the Hyperstudio and assumed the role of faculty director there.

During AY2009, Sandy Alexandre served as a member of the MIT Corporation's Joint Advisory Committee on Institute-Wide Affairs, and as a judge for the Kelly-Douglas Prize. Sarah Brouillette was on the Eloranta Fellowship Committee, Noel Jackson on the HASS Overview Committee. Mary Fuller served on the selection committee for the new Mellon Postdoctoral Fellowships in the Humanities. David Thorburn continued his direction of the MIT Communications Forum. During the fall term Jackie Breen served as a mentor for the new Administrative Officer Fundamentals Training. She will continue to serve as a member of the AO Development Programs Advisory Group.

Conclusion

As a collective and individually, the members of MIT's Literature faculty continue to be highly productive in research, deeply engaged in important professional and Institute business, and proficient and innovative in undergraduate teaching. In spite of the departure of two valued colleagues, we continue to enjoy excellent working relationships, both among ourselves and with others at the Institute. We look forward to expanding our contributions to MIT's curriculum and to our professional fields. In our ongoing confrontation with the challenging economic environment, we take heart from the strength and cohesiveness of our professional community.

James Buzard

Section Head

Professor of Literature

More information about the Literature Section can be found at <http://lit.mit.edu/>.