

Comparative Media Studies/Writing Section

Overview

The [Comparative Media Studies/Writing section](#) (CMS/W) was formed this past academic year (2012–2013) by combining two School of Humanities and Social Sciences (SHASS) academic units primarily organized around the study, design, and creation of contemporary media. Comparative Media Studies and Writing and Humanistic Studies merged their faculties, staffs, and administrative resources to form a new academic unit offering undergraduate majors in both comparative media studies and writing as well as two SM degrees in comparative media studies and science writing. The merger, based on a combination of educational, research, and administrative factors, brought together two distinguished multidisciplinary faculty units organized around contemporary media-centered areas of research, design, and artistic production. Intellectually and artistically, the faculty share many interests and have a long track record of working together. Both units support sponsored media research initiatives such as the Center for Civic Media; the Mobile Experience Lab; the MIT Game Lab; the Imagination, Computation, and Expression Laboratory; HyperStudio; and the recently formed science journalism E-Lab.

Mission

Comparative Media Studies/Writing offers an academic program that applies critical analysis, collaborative research, and design across a variety of media arts, forms, and practices. Its students understand the dynamics of media change and can apply their insights to contemporary problems; they are also practitioners and artists who can work in multiple forms of contemporary media. CMS/W students are motivated by the desire to help shape the future by engaging with media industries and the arts in a time of rapid transformation associated with media change.

CMS/W is devoted to understanding the ways that media technologies can enrich the lives of individuals and communities locally, across the United States, and globally. CMS/W faculty, researchers, and students share a deep commitment to the development of pioneering new media tools through strategies that serve the needs of diverse communities in the 21st century.

In its approach to humanities and arts education, CMS/W:

- Offers graduate and undergraduate degree programs centered on teamwork and research laboratories
- Engages with media practices across historical periods, cultural settings, and methods in order to assess change, design new tools, and anticipate media developments
- Supports a distinguished studio and workshop curriculum featuring the techniques and traditions of contemporary fiction, poetry, creative nonfiction, journalism, digital media, professional communication, video, and games

- Works with programs throughout the Institute to draw on and enrich MIT's unique mix of intellectual and entrepreneurial talent
- Cultivates a community of students, faculty, and staff devoted to the highest standards of scholarship and ethical practice
- Extends its educational work into industry, the arts, and the public sphere by offering socially aware, critically informed expertise and events

Academic Programs

The academic programs of CMS/W originated in the multidisciplinary study of the broad contemporary culture and its antecedents, as well as in the specific histories and practices of artistic, social, and professional media that contribute so much of the content of contemporary culture. What most distinguishes the CMS/W academic programs, beyond their focus on contemporary culture, is their extensive basis in project-oriented research in the humanities and social sciences and in the practices of storytelling in the framework of contemporary media. Both faculty and research staff conduct research, as CMS/W supports a number of research groups organized around key approaches to contemporary media and communication.

CMS/W offers two undergraduate majors in the School of Humanities, Arts, and Social sciences and two graduate SM degree programs. The undergraduate majors, one in comparative media studies and the other in writing, offer MIT undergraduates the opportunity to study contemporary media in a variety of ways, from comparative critical and historical approaches to hands-on practices, including communicating in the professions. The combined 35 undergraduate majors in CMS/W make up the second largest undergraduate major program in the School. In addition, CMS/W has 11 minors and 139 concentrators.

CMS/W supports two subunits: the Writing Across the Curriculum program (WAC), which works closely with departments throughout the Institute to teach communication within the majors, and the Writing and Communication Center (WCC), which offers support to undergraduates, graduate students, and postdocs. The WAC group, which supports the MIT Communication Requirement, worked with about 4,000 students in AY2013, and the WCC group worked with about 1,500 students and postdocs.

Comparative Media Studies Major

Now in its fifth academic year, the comparative media studies undergraduate major enrolled 29 students, including nine students in the 21E (humanities/engineering) major and five double majors. Of this group, 11 were women. Two students graduated in February 2013 and nine in June 2013, bringing the total number of students who have graduated from the CMS undergraduate program, from its inception as an experimental major in 2003 through 2013, to 80. As of June 2013, CMS had five minors and 78 concentrators. During AY2013, CMS sponsored 43 Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) positions for pay or credit, and another 16 students are participating in CMS-sponsored UROP projects this summer.

CMS graduates have gone on to careers in global digital commerce, video game production, brand management and marketing, research, graphics, and social networking software design at companies such as Nike, Electronic Arts, MTV, Microsoft, Google, ImaginEngine, Oracle, and the Congressional Quarterly; others have pursued studies in theater arts, fine arts, or law. Many have gone on to leading graduate programs in the United States and abroad.

Writing Major

During the past year, the writing unit included six majors, seven minors, and 61 concentrators in writing for the Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (HASS) Requirement. Writing majors are often double majors and have gone on to careers in areas such as journalism, fiction writing, and public information.

Comparative Media Studies Graduate Program

In another record-breaking year for the [Comparative Media Studies graduate program](#), we received 146 applications to the master of science program for AY2014. Ten students were accepted into the class of 2015, of whom five are women, one is an underrepresented minority, and two are international students. One student was awarded the Ida Green Fellowship from the Office of the Dean for Graduate Education, and another won a competitive fellowship from the China Scholarship Council.

In 2013, CMS graduated 10 students with master's degrees, the first full graduating class since 2011. From this class, one student already has a contract to publish her thesis as a book. In past years, graduates of the CMS master's program have worked at companies such as Lucasfilm, Microsoft, HBO, Midway Studios, Razorfish, Etsy, Deloitte Consulting, Nickelodeon, PBS, NPR, WHERE (a leading location media company), and Greenovate, in positions such as creative strategist, game designer, television producer, documentary filmmaker, and project manager. Others have gone on to PhD programs at such schools as McGill University; Duke University; the University of Southern California; Columbia University; the University of California, Irvine; the University of California, Los Angeles; and the University of Wisconsin-Madison, as well as MIT's Program in Science, Technology, and Society. Graduates are now in faculty positions at Simon Fraser University, the University of Michigan, and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Graduate Program in Science Writing

The Graduate Program in Science Writing has graduated 11 classes and a total of 78 SM students. Our graduates hold positions at *IEEE Spectrum*, *Technology Review*, Boston public television station WGBH's *Nova*, the *Boston Globe*, *Smithsonian* magazine, the Joslin Diabetes Center, the National Institutes of Health, and Oxford University Press, among others, and freelance for a wide variety of publications. Emily Anthes '06 published her book *Frankenstein's Cat: Cuddling up to Biotech's Brave New Beasts* in April 2013. Lisa Song '09 was awarded a Pulitzer Prize for national reporting along with her colleagues from the web publication *Inside Climate News*.

Contributions to MIT through Academic Programs and Initiatives

During 2012–2013, the Writing and Communication Center was back at full strength after the previous year's medical leaves, and service was restored to all members of the MIT community, including undergraduate and graduate students, postdocs, faculty, and staff. The WCC staff assisted 1,136 different individuals in a total of 3,503 consultations that provided assistance with reports, papers, oral presentations, pronunciation, research and teaching statements, job and graduate school applications, articles for publication, proposals, books, and thesis projects. Of these visits, 40% were made by members of the School of Engineering, 22% by members of the School of Architecture and Planning, 16% by members of SHASS, 12% by members of the School of Science, and 9% by members of the Sloan School of Management. On anonymous surveys, clients gave the center's staff a 6.75 ranking on a 7-point scale.

Publications

Assistant professor Vivek Bald published *Bengali Harlem and the Hidden Histories of South Asian America* (Harvard University Press, 2012). His edited collection for New York University Press, *The Sun Never Sets: South Asian Migrants in an Age of U.S. Power*, was released in June 2013.

Senior lecturer Edward Barrett published *Building Mobile Experiences* (with F. Bentley; MIT Press, 2012). He also published the following poems: "Vor" in *Let the Bucket Down* (2013), "All Souls' Day," "With a Practiced Flick of Her Toe...", "Raw Yellow," "If Hölderlin Wrote An Irish Air," "Smith and 9th," "Cocktail Napkin Sonnets," and "Shannon Airport" in *Boston Poetry Magazine* (2013).

Adjunct professor Marcia Bartusiak continues to write "Cosmic Background," a bimonthly column for *Natural History* magazine. She is also a regular reviewer of science books for the *Washington Post*.

Assistant professor Sasha Costanza-Chock's book *Transmedia Activism: Social Movements in the New Media Ecology* has been accepted for publication by MIT Press. He also published "Mic Check! Media Cultures and the Occupy Movement" in *Social Movement Studies: Journal of Social, Cultural and Political Protest* and "Youth and Social Movements: Key Lessons for Allies" in *The Role of Youth Organizations and Youth Movements for Social Change* (Kinder & Braver World Project Research Series, 2012).

Professor Junot Diaz published a new novel, *This Is How You Lose Her* (Penguin Riverhead, 2012), a finalist for the National Book Award. He also published "The Cheaters Guide to Love" in *The New Yorker*, "Loving Ray Bradbury" on *Newyorker.com*, and "Dream of a Red King," an introduction to Library of America's reissue of Edgar Rice Burroughs' *A Princess of Mars*.

In her role as editor, professor Heather Hendershot published two issues of *Cinema Journal* and sent her final issue of the journal into production. In addition, she published "Eye for an Eye" on *Artforum.com*; this short piece focused on the avant-garde animation program at the Museum of Arts and Design in New York.

Professor Helen Elaine Lee published an essay, “Visible Men,” in the *New York Times Sunday Book Review*.

Professor Thomas Levenson published “There Should Be Grandeur,” an article about the sequester, on *ScientificAmerican.com*. In addition, he published “New Life for a Deadly Disease” on *Newyorker.com* and “Story of a Study of the Mind” on *TechnologyReview.com* and in the *MIT News Magazine*. He also reviewed *Circulation: William Harvey’s Revolutionary Idea* by Thomas Wright for the *Literary Review*.

Professor of the practice Alan Lightman published “The Symmetrical Universe” in *Orion* magazine, “The Temporary Universe” in *Tin House*, and “Our Place in the Universe,” a cover story for *Harper’s Magazine*.

Assistant professor Seth Mnookin published several articles, including “Truth and Consequences: Why So Many Parents Are Delaying or Skipping Vaccines—And What It Means for the Rest of Us” in *Parade*; “Pardis Sabeti, the Rollerblading Rock Star Scientist of Harvard” in *Smithsonian* magazine; “Gene Blues” on *Newyorker.com*; and “Vaccine Denialism Isn’t Funny, So Why Does HuffPost Give Rob Schneider a Forum?” in *Txchnologist*. He also edited *Electric Shock*, an ebook by Cynthia Graber.

Associate professor Nick Montfort published *10 PRINT CHR\$(205.5+RND(1)); : GOTO 10* (with Patsy Baudoin, John Bell, Ian Bogost, Jeremy Douglass, Mark C. Marino, Michael Mateas, Casey Reas, Mark Sample, and Noah Vawter; MIT Press). He also published “Interactive Fiction” (with N. Katherine Hayles) in *The Routledge Companion to Experimental Literature*, “Shuffle Literature and the Hand of Fate” (with Zuzana Husárová) in the *Electronic Book Review*, “Interactive Fiction Communities: From Preservation through Promotion and Beyond” (with Emily Short) in *Dichtung Digital*, and “The Dreamcast, Console of the Avant-Garde” (with Mia Consalvo) in *Loading...The Journal of the Canadian Game Studies Association*.

Associate professor T.L. Taylor published *Ethnography and Virtual Worlds: A Handbook of Method* (with T. Boellstorff, B. Nardi, and C. Pearce; Princeton University Press).

Professor William Uricchio published “New Media Literacies: Technology and Cultural Form” in *Between Page and Screen: Remaking Literature Through Cinema and Cyberspace* (Kiene Brillenburg Wurth, ed.; New York: Fordham University Press); “The Algorithmic Turn: Photosynth, Augmented Reality and the Changing Implications of the Image” in *Cultural Technologies: The Shaping of Culture in Media and Society* (Gorin Bolin, ed.; London: Routledge); “The Recurrent, the Recombinatory and the Ephemeral” in *Ephemeral Media: Transitory Screen Culture from Television to YouTube* (Paul Grainge, ed.; London: British Film Institute/Palgrave Macmillan); and “A Palimpsest of Place and Past: Location-Based Digital Technologies and the Performance of Urban Space and Memory” in *Performance Research*. He also published an online white paper, *Moments of Innovation*.

The Chinese edition of professor Jing Wang’s *Brand New China: Advertising, Media, and Commercial Culture* was published (Peking University Press, 2012). She also published “Youth Music Marketing” in *Blue Book on Cultural Studies* (Tao Dongfeng, ed.; Social Science Archive Publishers, 2012).

Presentations and Awards

In October 2012, Professor Bald delivered a paper titled “From Bellingham to Oak Creek: Considerations on Race, Immigration, and Empire” as part of a symposium (Border Crossing: Citizenship, Race, Gender) sponsored by the Program in Women and Gender Studies’ Borders Research Initiative and the MIT Center for Bilingual/Bicultural Studies. In November, he presented “Harlem, Black Bottom, Tremé: South Asian Muslims in US Communities of Color, 1890–1965” as part of the “South Asia Without Borders” seminar series at Harvard University.

Senior lecturer Barrett was invited to give a poetry reading in May 2013 at Upstairs in the Square.

Professor Costanza-Chock was an invited panelist at “Out for Change: The Future of LGBT Rights” and “From Participatory Culture to Political Participation,” MIT, November 2012. He also gave a panel presentation, “DREAM activists y la cultura mediática de l@s estudiantes inmigrantes en movimiento en Estados Unidos,” at the UC/International Communications Association Latin American conference in Santiago de Chile, October 2012.

Professor Diaz won the MacArthur “Genius” Fellowship from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. He was also a finalist for the 2012 National Book Award and for the *Sunday Times* EFG Private Bank Short Story Award. Professor Diaz gave many literary readings across the country during AY2013.

In November 2012, Professor Hendershot gave a talk titled “William F. Buckley Jr., TV, and the Mainstreaming of Conservative Republicanism” at the meeting of the American Studies Association in San Juan, Puerto Rico. In addition, she made the closing comments at the Futures of Entertainment conference at MIT in November.

Professor Levenson gave two talks: “‘Mere Opinion’: Newton and Money, Hard and Soft” (Grant’s Interest Rate Observer Conference, New York) and “Narrative in Science Writing” (UK Conference of Science Journalists, London).

Professor Lightman gave public lectures on science, art, and religion at the Roald Hoffmann Symposium (Cornell University) Ithaca, Cambridge Friend’s School, the Boston Book Festival, MIT Hillel, the Luminato Arts Festival in Toronto, and Rhodes College.

Professor Mnookin won the “Science in Society” book award from the National Association of Science Writers and the Will Solimine Award for Excellence in Medical Communication from the New England Chapter of the American Medical Writers Association for *The Panic Virus*. *The Panic Virus* was also a finalist for the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize in the current interest category. Mnookin’s *New York Magazine* article “The Kingdom and the Paywall” was a finalist for the John M. Higgins Award for Best In-Depth/Enterprise Reporting from Syracuse University’s S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communication.

Professor Montfort gave several talks, including “Creative Computing, Beginning with 10 PRINT” (with Patsy Baudoin and Noah Vawter) at the Boston Cyberarts Gallery; “Programming for Fun, Together,” the keynote address at the Remediating the Social conference in Edinburgh; “The ELO and Two E-Lit Exhibits” at the Workshop on Curating and Exhibiting Electronic Literature (Bergen, Norway); “Electronic Literature’s Units and Bindings,” the keynote address at the National Information Standards Organization’s E-Book Renaissance in Boston; “The Art of Operationalization” at the Media Systems Workshop at the University of California, Santa Cruz; “Gamer vs. Scener, or, Scener Theory,” the keynote address at the Digital Games Research Association’s Nordic 2012 conference in Tampere, Finland; “The One Liner and Computational Art” at the University of Michigan’s Digital Environments Cluster; and “Critical Game Studies: Three Family Resemblances and Some Black Sheep” at the 26th Annual Meeting of the Society for Literature, Science, and the Arts in Milwaukee, WI.

Professor Taylor participated in panel discussions including “Futures of Video Gaming” at the Futures of Entertainment conference at MIT. In addition, she gave an invited talk, “Ethnographies of Online and Mobile Media Today,” at the Association of Internet Researchers conference in Manchester, England, and a talk titled “Watch Me Play: Live-streaming, Computer Games, and the Future of Spectatorship” at Microsoft headquarters in Redmond, WA.

Professor Wang’s presentations included “NGO2.0 and Social Content Production” and “NGO2.0 and Its Development” at the Anhui University School of Journalism and Communication (Anhui Province, China); “NGO2.0 and Social Content Production” at Sichuan University in Chengdu, (Sichuan Province) “NGO2.0: The Untold Stories” at the Civic Media and Information Technology international symposium at Sun Yat-sen University (Guangzhou); “New Media Communication Strategies” at the Web 2.0 Workshop in Changsha; “NGO and Software Developers’ Community” at Chaihuo Maker Space in Shenzhen; “NGO 2.0 and Philanthropy Map” at the Guangzhou Academy of the Arts (Guangzhou); “Civic Communication in New Media Environment: Theories and Case Studies” at Sun Yat-sen University’s Center for Civic Media and Communication; and “NGO2.0 and Social Media” at the Narada Foundation in Beijing.

Comparative Media Studies Research Groups

Education Arcade

The [Education Arcade](#) (TEA) seeks to identify the pedagogical potential of games as a medium and to find ways to use games for learning both in and out of the classroom. This year TEA continued work on Radix, an online multiplayer game funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation that incorporates high school math and biology curricula. TEA is now in the process of creating games to promote academic literacy among elementary school students, also with Gates Foundation funding. TEA has begun work on the design of the online version of CMS.100 Introduction to Media Studies, with the goal of demonstrating the true affordances of technology-enabled learning in the humanities. The online course is planned for spring 2014 on MITx, and TEA will further explore its potential implementation on a broader scale on EDx.

HyperStudio

In April 2013, [HyperStudio](#) successfully completed a one-year National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Digital Humanities Start-Up grant for “Annotation Studio—Multimedia Text Annotation for Students” (with professor Jim Paradis as principal investigator [PI] and Kurt Fendt as co-PI), after having applied for an NEH Digital Humanities Implementation grant for the studio in January. In July 2013 NEH awarded one of six national NEH Digital Humanities Implementation grants for the project. The project was presented at the NEH grantee meeting in Washington, DC (September 2012), and the Digital Humanities Colloquium at the University of Chicago (November 2012), and an invited talk was given at the Digital Humanities Symposium at George Washington University (January 2013). In addition, Annotation Studio was presented at the Days of Digital Humanities conference at Northeastern University (March 2013), the Melville Electronic Library Camp at Texas A&M University (March 2013), the Annotation Workshop at Harvard University (March 2013), and the iAnnotate Workshop in San Francisco (April 2013).

Another HyperStudio project, “The Comédie-Française Registers Project” (with professor Jeffrey Ravel as PI and Fendt as co-PI), was awarded a three-year grant by the French national research organization ANR. This project, a collaboration with MIT’s History Department, Harvard University, and the Universities of Paris IV (Sorbonne) and Paris X (Nanterre), was presented at the Days of Digital Humanities conference at Northeastern University (March 2013) and the HASTAC (Humanities, Arts, Science and Technology Advanced Collaboratory) conference (April 2013). A peer-reviewed paper based on data visualization work using Comédie-Française Registers data was presented at the 2013 Digital Humanities Conference in Lincoln, NE. HyperStudio’s weekly email newsletter for the field of digital humanities, *h+d insights*, has increased its readership to more than 550 subscribers.

Imagination, Computation, and Expression Laboratory

The [Imagination, Computation, and Expression Laboratory](#) (ICE Lab), established at MIT in 2010 by associate professor D. Fox Harrell, researches and develops artificial intelligence and cognitive science–based computing systems for creative expression, cultural analysis, and social change. Outcomes include new forms of gaming, interactive narrative, social media, software art, and, most importantly, unanticipated creative computing forms.

The major initiative of the ICE Lab is the Advanced Identity Representation (AIR) Project, in which Harrell is Principal Investigator (\$535,060 over five years—NSF CAREER Award). The AIR Project, supported by the National Science Foundation, develops new models and technology to enable users to more creatively and powerfully represent themselves on computers using characters, avatars, profiles, online accounts, and more. As a major part of this effort, the ICE Lab is refining its AIR toolkit, a set of software tools for modeling computational identity phenomena; for example, multiple self-representations can be used to reflect identity phenomena, including different self-presentations in different communities. An application-level research direction being pursued by the ICE Lab is developing models of user player empowerment and self-

expression in games. Another ICE Lab system is *Mimesis*; an iOS version of *Mimesis* builds on the outcomes of an NEH Digital Humanities Start-Up Grant (“Gesture, Rhetoric, and Digital Storytelling” (\$24,999 for one year).

MIT Game Lab

In 2012 and 2013, researchers at the [MIT Game Lab](#) published two books, *Sports Videogames* and *The Culture of Digital Fighting Games*; contributed to major conferences on games studies and computer-human interaction; and published journal articles and book chapters. In addition, books in the MIT Press Playful Thinking series, coedited by Game Lab primary investigator William Uricchio, are beginning to be published. Also, six games and two open source toolkits have been published by Game Lab students and researchers. The nine classes as well as the research and development opportunities offered by the Game Lab have maintained MIT’s standing within the *Princeton Review*’s top 10 schools for undergraduate or graduate study of game development for the fourth consecutive year. Three of the games developed at the lab this past summer and three from previous summers won awards at conferences in various fields over the past year, gaining recognition in academia and industry.

The Game Lab began the school year in September by hosting a symposium and a festival. Also, the lab cohosted the Boston Festival of Indie Games in 2012, attended by more than 2,000 people. The event was covered in national media, placing MIT and the Game Lab as a center for independent game development. In January, we added new CMS faculty member T.L. Taylor to our Faculty Committee and began engaging with Mikael Jakobsson, then a CMS visiting professor and now a Game Lab research scientist.

That same month, the lab hosted its largest game jam yet with the Education Arcade and the Learning Games Network, where over 100 people came to make games about sensitive topics including love, disease, the organ donation system, and transgender issues. In August, the lab will expand its outreach program by teaching a one-week summer short program via MIT Professional Education. Also, this summer the Game Lab received a \$100,000 expendable anonymous gift donation, and a scheduled series of \$200,000 endowment donations are providing a foundation of funds to stabilize the new lab.

Mobile Experience Laboratory

The [MIT Mobile Experience Laboratory](#), directed by Dr. Federico Casalegno, seeks to reinvent and creatively design connections among people, information, and places. Using cutting-edge information and mobile technology, the lab seeks to improve people’s lives through the careful design of new social spaces and communities. Among its ongoing research projects, the lab signed a three-year partnership with the petrol company ENI as part of the MIT Energy Initiative. This project will redesign a smart fuel station. Future fuel stations must consider both the physical architecture and the digital services that support the fuel station experience. Stations must balance needed function and ease with potential for use case expansion. New media, information, and communication technologies can catalyze innovation and new services.

In January, the lab organized an international symposium on pervasive media sharing to discuss ideas on pervasive and mobile computing and to rethink storytelling, civic engagement, and the perception and creation of information in urban space. The symposium also celebrated the Open Locast U project, a partnership between the Mobile Experience Laboratory and a talented worldwide pool of universities and collaborators; the project, initiated in September 2012, will explore new ways of utilizing the Open Locast web and mobile platform in the urban environment.

In addition, the lab carried out research on geolocated media and picture sharing and then developed and tested an innovative application for mobile phones called FLIPR. This mobile application combines web and mobile media sharing and uses time-lapse animation. It can be created by a single person or can be a collaborative project to which many people contribute photos. Also, we have a group of researchers and UROP students who are designing a mobile application to reinvent mobile computing and sport.

Open Documentary Lab

The MIT [Open Documentary Lab](#) brings storytellers, technologists, and scholars together to advance the new arts of documentary. Founded by Professor Uricchio, the lab is a center of documentary scholarship and experimentation at MIT. Through courses, workshops, public lectures, and experimental projects, the lab educates and actively engages the MIT community and the larger public in new documentary practices. In its first full year, the lab began to fulfill some of its research and educational goals. With Uricchio as lead PI, the lab received a \$66,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to create a curated database of new documentary forms. The lab also developed an innovative new website, *Moments of Innovation: When Documentary and Technology Converge*, to chronicle the history of current documentary practices; it has been showcased at festivals worldwide, including the Cannes Film Festival and Tribeca Interactive. Together with the Tribeca Film Institute, the lab received a small grant from the Fledgling Fund to write two case studies about participatory storytelling. Professor Costanza-Chock will be the lead PI on the grant. The lab's two research assistants, Katie Edgerton and Julie Fischer, participated in *Creating Critics*, an inaugural program at the Sundance Film Festival. This program will train the next generation of digital storytelling critics. In addition, Edgerton and Fischer wrote articles for a key trade publication, *Indiewire*. The lab also hosted a workshop for the National Film Board of Canada with our games researchers and offered a workshop about participatory storytelling for media makers. Professor Uricchio and director Sarah Wolozin presented the work of the lab worldwide. The lab received a \$30,000 grant from MIT's Office of the Arts to host visiting artist Katerina Cizek, a pioneer in interactive storytelling. The lab continues to develop workshops, courses, and its research agenda.

Trope Tank

The [Trope Tank](#), directed by Professor Montfort, is a lab for research, teaching, and creative production that offers material computing systems from decades past, all of them curated, functioning, and ready for use by researchers and students. MIT classes continue to visit the Trope Tank, and the lab continues to host the monthly meetings of the local group the People's Republic of Interactive Fiction. Trope Tank equipment

has supported presentations this year at such venues as the Boston Cyberarts Gallery; Microsoft Research in Redmond, WA; the University of California, Los Angeles; and the University of Maine. The Trope Tank was also the topic of a presentation Professor Montfort was invited to give at the Preserving.exe summit at the Library of Congress. The lab has issued five technical reports in its “Trope Report” series; all are now archived in MIT’s DSpace. The lab’s Slant project, designed to develop a new story generation system, was initiated during the past year, and the first paper on the project was accepted and presented at the 2013 International Conference on Computational Creativity in Sydney. The project involves integrating or developing new work based on decades of research by Professor Montfort, professor Rafael Pérez y Pérez of UAM (Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana) Cuajimalpa, and Professor Harrell. Finally, a multiyear creative Trope Tank collaboration, the Deletionist, premiered at E-Poetry 2013 at Kingston University in London.

Staffing and Appointments

We are happy to report that Vivek Bald was promoted to associate professor without tenure and D. Fox Harrell was promoted to associate professor with tenure. Interim director of the Writing Across the Curriculum program Suzanne Lane was promoted to senior lecturer and director of WAC after a nationwide search for this position. Professor Edward Schiappa will move from visiting professor to professor of rhetoric and media studies at the start of the new academic year. The WAC program also searched for and successfully hired an associate director, Andreas Karatsolis, and three new full-time lecturers: Jared Berezin, Amelia Herb, and Michael Trice. In addition, lecturers Marilyn Levine and Amanda Sobel were reappointed for two years.

Next year we will conduct a search for a tenured associate or full professor in media studies to fill the slot left vacant by professor Henry Jenkins, who left CMS three years ago. The area of expertise will be left relatively open in the interests of attracting a versatile generalist with a range of research and intellectual capabilities.

Professors Uricchio and Levenson were on leave during AY2013. Professors Bald and Costanza-Chock were on leave during the spring semester.

Fundraising and Research Grants

Although development officer Susan Fienberg left MIT and CMS in June for a new position, her efforts were instrumental in securing new research funding, including a \$66,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to support a database of new methods for the Open Documentary Lab (Professor Uricchio, PI), a \$350,000 two-year grant from NEH to HyperStudio (Professor Paradis, PI) to support the continued development and implementation of the Annotation Studio, and a \$250,000 Ford Foundation grant (“Out for Change: Transmedia Organizing Network”) to the Center for Civic Media (Professor Costanza-Chock, PI). In addition, Professor Mnookin received Alumni Class Funds support for the development of a new course, “Topics in 21st Century Journalism;” Professor Levenson received an IBM faculty grant of \$15,000 to support public science communication through E-Lab; and research scientist Scot Osterweil received \$100,000 from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation to examine existing models of deeper learning curricula for widespread implementation.

Outreach

CMS/W engages in extensive outreach activities during the academic year. Throughout the year, the section sponsored its annual Media Colloquium, which featured nearly 20 speakers on media from around the country. In addition, it cosponsored the ongoing Communications Forum in the fall and spring terms. Professor Harrell's series, *The Cognitive Basis of Media*, brought in prominent national speakers, including linguist George Lakoff and cognitive scientist Mark Turner. In the fall, CMS/W sponsored the Futures of Entertainment conference, which brought to MIT researchers from corporations involved in media innovations. In the spring term, CMS sponsored the international Media in Transition conference, bringing some 250 media scholars from around the world to talk on the conference's theme, "Public Media/Private Media." Also, CMS/W cosponsored the Sandbox Summit educational conference through the Education Arcade and cosponsored several smaller meetings, workshops, and series through the Open Documentary Lab, the Center for Civic Media, the Graduate Program in Science Writing, HyperStudio, and the MIT Game Lab.

James Paradis

Head, Comparative Media Studies/Writing

Robert M. Metcalfe Professor of Writing and Comparative Media