

## **Comparative Media Studies/Writing Section**

Comparative Media Studies/Writing (CMS/W) had another successful year, using AY2020 to continue to foreground its innovative programs that apply critical analysis, collaborative research, and design across a variety of media arts, forms, and practices. Our academic programs, research groups, and faculty did well in its deep commitment to the development of pioneering new tools and strategies that serve the needs of diverse communities in the 21st century, all while making impressive adjustments to their teaching following campus closures because of COVID-19.

CMS/W was well-positioned to find curricular and research opportunities in the wake of COVID-19. As documented below, faculty such as Assistant Professor Justin Reich quickly developed guidance to help teachers at all levels address student motivation, burnout, and exacerbated inequities. Likewise, Professor of the Practice of the Humanities Alan Lightman found high-profile opportunities to use COVID-19 as a jumping-off point to, with Oprah Winfrey, discuss “the presence and necessity of spirituality, even or especially as the world fights a battle over scientific truth.” And lecturers such as Erica Funkhouser found ways for undergraduate students to express their experiences, such as her poetry project with students under the heading Pandemic Spring.

Lastly, before the pandemic closed campus, it was also another impressive year in terms of public events. The Comparative Media Studies Colloquium series focused the fall semester on CMS/W faculty, with talks by professors T. L. Taylor, Paloma Duong, Eric Klopfer, William Uricchio, Vivek Bald, Helen Lee, Nick Montfort, and Ian Condry. CMS/W again hosted the William Corbett Poetry Series, overseen by lecturer Edward Barrett, and this year saw our Design Lab run the three-day conference Beyond Intelligence focusing on “designing for connected and expressive artificial ecosystems.”

### **Academic Programs**

#### **Undergraduate Comparative Media Studies Major**

The undergraduate program in comparative media studies offers students an opportunity for interdisciplinary study of film, television, game design, virtual worlds, digital artworks, civic media, and interactive writing, as well as other communications media and education. Now in its 12th year, it enrolled 26 students, including 11 students in Course 21E/S (humanities and engineering/science) joint major and four double majors. In AY2020, 16 majors graduated, which brings the total number of students who have graduated from the CMS undergraduate program, from its inception as an experimental major, to 144. In 2020, CMS had two minors and 113 concentrators. During AY2020, CMS sponsored 86 Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) positions for pay or credit. CMS graduates have gone on to careers in global digital commerce, video game production, brand management and marketing, program management, research, nonprofit management, and social networking software design at companies such as Twitch, Electronic Arts, YouTube, World Wildlife Fund, Google, Facebook, Oracle, Samsung, and Accenture; others have pursued studies in theater arts, fine arts, or law. Many others have gone on to leading graduate programs in the United States and abroad.

### **Education Concentration**

In AY2020, the Subcommittee on the HASS Requirement approved a HASS concentration in education. Justin Reich will serve as the first concentration advisor.

### **CMS Graduate Program**

In 2020, the CMS graduate program received 50 applications and admitted seven students, including three international students. The program also graduated eight students with master's degrees in May, and one in September 2019. In AY2020, Eric Klopfer served as director of Graduate Studies, and Scot Osterweil as associate director.

### **Undergraduate Writing Major**

In 2020, five writing majors received degrees. A total of 17 students majored, including three students in the 21E/S (humanities and engineering/science) joint major and 10 double majors. In addition, writing had two minors, and 63 concentrators. Writing majors have gone onto careers in journalism, fiction writing, education management, consulting, business analysis, technical writing, and public information.

### **Graduate Program in Science Writing**

In 2020, the Graduate Program in Science Writing received 61 applicants and admitted seven students, including two international students. The program also graduated eight students, who now hold jobs at the *New York Times* and *Grist*, among others. They have had their work published in dozens of science magazines and journals, including the *New York Times*, *Science*, *National Geographic*, and *Hakai Magazine*.

The program continued its collaboration with the Knight Science Journalism Fellowship program, providing four students as research assistants to write for *Undark* magazine. This year, all of our students had placements in half-time research assistant positions within the School of Engineering, School of Architecture and Planning, and School of Science, in addition to *Undark*, the Knight Science Journalism magazine. This initiative was a success, providing the students with substantial financial support and valuable work experience.

### **Transitions**

Two faculty members left CMS/W at the end of AY2020. Associate Professor Sasha Costanza-Chock's tenure case was unsuccessful. They left the section to become a research scientist at the MIT Media Lab and faculty associate with the Berkman Klein Center for Internet and Society at Harvard University. Professor Lisa Parks decided to return to her previous faculty position at the University of California at Santa Barbara. During AY2021, she will hold a visiting professor position at MIT, allowing her to supervise the completion of her advisees' theses.

### **CMS/W Research Groups**

CMS/W wound down two research groups in AY2020: the Center for Civic Media and the Design Lab, with another in the process of being added, the Civic Design Initiative—which looks to address global issues and advance civic well-being through design.

The Game Lab, as part of its mission to bring together scholars, creators, and technologists, this past year explored the use of play in varying contexts, including education and technology, connected both to research projects and through residential classes. The seven courses offered by the Game Lab, connected with its research and development opportunities, have maintained MIT's standing within the Princeton Review's top schools for undergraduate or graduate study of game development for a 10th year running. Game Lab furthers this mission through active collaboration with other labs and centers on MIT's campus to create playful experiences.

It has been pursuing projects in collaboration with the entertainment video game industry through the Ludus Center for Games, Learning, and Playful Media, a membership-based research consortium. Recently, the MIT Game Lab concluded a research relationship with Bose, of Framingham, Massachusetts, to conduct design research around creating audio-only augmented reality experiences.

As part of a broader research project focused on surveying representations of European colonialism in board games, an MIT Center for Art, Science & Technology (CAST)-funded proposal is supporting design and development work to create a "counter-colonialist" board game about topics of importance to the people of Puerto Rico, such as local government and international response to the devastation caused by Hurricane Maria, with the working title of PROMESA. The Game Lab has collaborated with the MIT Community Innovators Lab (CoLab) in conducting workshops for this project.

The Game Lab has contributed to the design of games-based assessment with the MIT Playful Journeys Lab, designing ShadowSpec, a game for math and geometry learners, and developing a new game for high school students that measures their executive function capacity under calm and stressful situations, which might be helpful for students developing higher-level strategies to manage their stress in day-to-day and academic settings.

Supported by MIT's Abdul Latif Jameel World Education Lab (J-WEL) and in collaboration with the MIT-Nepal Initiative, the MIT Game Lab meets with designers and programmers of the Open Learning Exchange Nepal, developing learning games for students in Nepal, sharing best practices and providing feedback on early prototypes for ongoing software projects.

The Education Arcade and Game Lab is completing a three-year project, titled CLEVR (Collaborative Learning Environments in Virtual Reality), investigating the use of virtual reality (VR) games to help students understand issues of scale in biological systems, particularly at the cellular and DNA level. Prototype development and initial research was supported by an unrestricted gift from Oculus. Additional funds have been provided through the MIT Integrated Learning Initiative to support further study and investigation using VR in education.

In collaboration with the AIM Photonics Academy in MIT's Department of Materials Science and Engineering, the Education Arcade and Game Lab began contributing to the Virtual Manufacturing Lab, a three-year Office of Naval Research Manufacturing

Engineering Education Program (ONR/MEEP)-sponsored project creating games for learners interested in the use and importance of integrated photonics, including hyperscale data centers, lab-on-a-chip sensors, radio frequency (RF) avionics, and LIDAR applications.

The Global Media Technologies and Cultures Lab, which launched in 2017, had another very busy year as it explored uses of media, information, and communication technologies in international contexts, and investigated surveillance technologies and practices to preserve digital privacy. In AY2020 the lab met every two weeks as a group, whether in person or via Zoom, and had updates on various research projects and presentations by grad students, faculty, and researchers.

Members of the lab conducted fieldwork in connection with a National Science Foundation (NSF)-supported international research project called Network Sovereignty: Sociotechnical Relations in Rural Low-Income Communities. Fieldwork findings were reviewed and analyzed and during summer 2020 co-principal investigators (PIs) Lisa Parks and Ramesh Srinivasan (from University of California at Los Angeles) worked with CMS grad student Diego Cerna Aragon to write and submit a peer-reviewed journal article based on 2018 and 2019 fieldwork in Mexico and Tanzania. Fieldwork in Browning, Montana, had to be put on hold due to the Blackfeet Indian Reservation's COVID-19 closure.

Drawing on interviews of digital privacy advocates conducted in Washington, DC in 2018, co-PIs Lisa Parks and Jennifer Holt (University of California at Santa Barbara), wrote and submitted a peer-reviewed journal article entitled, "The Labor of Digital Privacy Advocacy in the Era of Big Tech," which is in the final stages of review at the *Media Industries Journal*. CMS grad student Iago Bojczuk assisted with this research.

The Open Documentary Lab (ODL) brings storytellers, technologists, and scholars together to advance the new arts of documentary. Founded by Professor William Uricchio and directed by Sarah Wolozin, the lab is a center of documentary scholarship and experimentation at MIT. Through its various initiatives, including the Co-Creation Studio, courses, workshops, fellowship program (with 15 fellows this past year), public lectures, experimental projects, and research (supported by two graduate research assistants), the lab educates and actively engages the MIT community and the larger public in a critical discourse about new documentary practices and encourages people to push the boundaries of nonfiction storytelling. The lab has attracted the interest of major foundations, including the MacArthur, Ford, and Knight foundations, and has developed funded partnerships with organizations, including Black Public Media, the Indigenous Screen Office, Witness, Mozilla, IDFA, and more.

This year, ODL's Co-Creation Studio continued to amplify the newly released Collective Wisdom [field report](#), authored by Uricchio and Katerina Cizek.

ODL's Co-Creation Studio also welcomed their first Mozilla Open Web Fellow, [Amelia Winger-Bearskin](#), and developed a partnership with the Canadian Indigenous Screen Office to design a custom, three-day program for 13 Canada-based Indigenous media scholars and artists on the theme of Indigenous knowledge, artificial intelligence, and digital worlds.

The lab also continued its lecture series, convenings, and resource development.

The lab's Medium publication, *Immerse: Creative Discussion of Emerging Nonfiction Storytelling* continued to thrive this year. It has received funding from the Knight Foundation and Ford Foundation and includes contributions by MIT faculty, researchers, and students.

William Uricchio continued to lead a joint five-year research initiative with the International Documentary Festival's Immersive Research and Development Network. This year, drawing on audience experiences of the festival's VR exhibits, the research explored the distinction between storytelling and storyfinding—the process of narrative creation within interactive settings.

Projects incubated at ODL by ODL fellows also had success. *In Event of Moon Disaster*—a deepfake [project](#) co-directed by ODL fellow [Halsey Burgund](#) and Fran Panetta, extended reality (XR) creative director of the MIT Center for Advanced Virtuality—premiered at the International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam. Wampum.code is one of the newest [projects](#) by Mozilla Co-Creation Fellow Amelia-Winger Bearskin that will bring greater accountability to tech with a new model for values-based dependencies in software projects. Her model is founded in Indigenous values and practices, specifically Haudenosaunee, or Iroquois, a Confederacy of six Indigenous Nations.

ODL also partnered with Black Public Media (BPM) and CAST to create a new remote fellowship to support Black creatives working in emerging media. The [BPM Fellowship](#) was designed for a Black documentary filmmaker, artist, journalist, or creative technologist who is using emerging technologies or “old tech” in new contexts.

The Imagination, Computation, and Expression Laboratory (ICE Lab) was established at MIT in 2010 by D. Fox Harrell, professor of digital media and artificial intelligence (AI). The ICE Lab applies AI and cognitive science approaches to the research and development of interactive narratives, video games, virtual reality, social media, and related forms of digital media. The ICE Lab recently [produced](#) a system and conducted research using VR for anti-bias training. The ICE Lab has also collaborated with Columbia University on an app to support youth in navigating their digital presence, and issues such as surveillance. Finally, with support from NCSOFT and MIT.nano a new [effort](#) has been initiated called Project VISIBLE, focused on modeling issues related to racial aggression, bullying, and sociability in gesture-driven VR. Furthermore, this year many of the ICE Lab's activities were aligned with those of the MIT Center for Advanced Virtuality, which Harrell also directs. It has been an eventful year, with the launch of several exciting initiatives. To name just three of our projects, there are: [Breakbeat Narratives](#) at the Universal Hip Hop Museum (UHHM); *In Event of Moon Disaster*, with support from the Open Documentary Lab; and [Corona Diaries](#).

Supporting informal learning and museum education, *Breakbeat Narratives* is an art installation located in the Bronx that takes museum-goers at the Universal Hip Hop Museum's exhibition at the Bronx Terminal Market on an interactive, personalized journey through hip-hop's history.

The Scheller Teacher Education Program and the Education Arcade continue to explore the intersections of pedagogy and technology to promote playful, powerful learning. In this unprecedented year, much of the work shifted to address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In direct response to the pandemic, this spring the STEP Lab in collaboration with Open Learning (OL), developed the FULL STEAM Ahead [program](#), making available existing K–12 resources (including weekly themed packages) for the community of teachers, parents, and students, reaching a worldwide audience with over 150,000 views from over 150 countries. The activities in spring 2020 developed into a more structured, targeted approach for the summer. We worked with local, majority African American charter schools to recruit students and expanded to a wider audience statewide. Twenty-six MIT students were recruited, hired, trained and supported as mentors and tutors, meeting the needs of youth seeking extra support as a result of the pandemic. At this time, the first of two three-week sessions have been completed, and 60 hours of project-based learning, math tutoring, and mentorship have been provided to 150 youths. Initial responses from parents, students, and MIT students have been very positive.

The Scheller Teacher Education Program (STEP)'s teacher licensing program had a large class this year, reflecting growing student interest. The class was able to pivot in the spring, adapting to public schools' shift to online learning.

We continued ongoing work implementing project-based learning in our collaborations with XQ Schools and the Emerson Collective. Our efforts involving teacher professional development and coaching transitioned to the virtual space through emphasizing our focus on co-design with teachers and the value of reflective practices, which are key to the capacity-building process. While challenging, the COVID-related opportunity to quickly rethink systems and structures proved especially helpful as the lab could both model and practice the kind of adaptive thinking and public reflection that characterizes its vision for teacher-designer expertise.

In partnership with Cynthia Breazeal of the MIT Media Lab and Hal Abelson of the Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory, STEP is beginning work developing an integrated curriculum, resources, and professional development about AI for middle school students. The STEP Lab's focus will be creating curriculum that bridges computational thinking with AI, and providing the professional development pathways for teachers.

Other projects in the lab continue to explore, through design and research, innovative educational applications of mobile games and simulations, virtual reality, alternate reality games, geolocation augmented reality, and other experimental and nontraditional formats.

The MIT Teaching Systems Lab (TSL)—established in 2015 by Assistant Professor Justin Reich—designs, implements, and researches the future of teacher learning. All around the world, education stakeholders are calling for more ambitious teaching and learning in classrooms: less rote recitation and more active, engaged learning. The only way that will be possible is if we can dramatically increase the quantity and quality of teacher learning available to educators throughout their careers. TSL works on this urgent,



global challenge through designing and researching the future of online and blended learning for educators, and through developing a series of teacher practice spaces that allow educators to rehearse for and reflect upon important decisions in teaching. The lab has four research scientists, two postdoctoral researchers, four instructional design staff, two graduate students from Comparative Media Studies, and over a dozen undergraduates who work with the lab during the year.

The lab received over \$4.5 million in new grants and gifts from the National Science Foundation, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Teaching Tolerance, and MIT International Science and Technology Initiatives, among others. With this support, TSL established a new research-practice partnership with 20 Boston Public School math teachers; launched a new postdoctoral fellowship for Black, Latinx, Native American, and first-generation learning engineers; and developed new massive, open, online courses (MOOCs) about equity teaching practices, supporting youth activism, and improving internet search literacy.

The lab published new research about online learning and teacher learning in the *International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, *Computers and Education*, the *Proceedings of the 2020 Learning Analytics and Knowledge Conference*, *Revista Iberoamericana de Educación a Distancia*, *AERA Open*, and the *Journal of Technology and Teacher Education*. A full list of TSL publications can be found on the [lab's website](#).

When school closures started in March 2020, the lab pivoted to begin several research efforts to support schools with remote learning and reopening plans. In late March, we analyzed all 50 state education agency plans for remote learning and published a widely read preprint. That work, and other advice for educators, was featured in *Nature*, *AAAS SciLine*, the *Boston Globe*, 90.9 FM WBUR, *NPRed*, *EdSurge*, *On Point*, *All Things Considered*, *Forbes*, *Center for Public Integrity*, *Facing History and Ourselves*, *Education Week*, *Educational Leadership*, *Atlantic*, *Commonwealth Magazine*, MIT OCW's *Chalk Radio* podcast, and the J-WEL *Teach Remote* series. Highlights from our pandemic-related work is available on our COVID-19 guidance [website](#).

The Trope Tank, directed by Professor Nick Montfort, is a lab for research, teaching, and creative production. Its mission is to develop new poetic practices and new understandings of digital media by focusing on the material, formal, and historical aspects of computation and language.

During AY2020, the Trope Tank had four researchers of different levels (from UROP to postdoctoral researchers).

The Trope Tank's physical facilities largely went into storage in 2019 when the renovation of Building 14 began. Resources remained available to allow us to work on an Apple II archiving project (suspended due to the pandemic) and a bibliographic project about computer-generated literary books, which was repositioned to deal with digital books. The literary magazine *Taper*, a project of Montfort's micropress Bad Quarto, which is pursued in alliance with the Trope Tank, continued into its fourth issue; a call for work for issue five (with a theme related to the pandemic) was posted.

The Trope Tank has heavily relied on a physical space for exploration and discovery. We look forward to reestablishing the lab/studio space when the Building 14 renovation is completed.

### **Writing, Rhetoric, and Professional Communication**

Writing, Rhetoric, and Professional Communication (WRAP), a teaching and research group of nearly 40 lecturers within CMS/W, is led by Director Suzanne Lane and Associate Director Andreas Karatsolis. WRAP collaborates with MIT faculty in every department to teach written, oral, and visual communication to over 4,000 students a year in more than 100 communication-intensive (CI) subjects. WRAP also teaches the foundational writing subjects (CI-HWs) in CMS/W, and provides communication instruction to graduate students in a number of departments.

WRAP guides MIT students from the essay exam that they take online before entering as first-years, through their four required communication-intensive subjects, and into their graduate education. WRAP administers the graduate writing exam, teaches the graduate subjects 21W.800J Business Writing for Supply Chain Management and 21W.801J Thesis Writing for Supply Chain Management, provides instruction in professional communication in 16.995 Doctoral Research and Communication Seminar and 1.976 Special Graduate Subject in Civil and Environmental Engineering, and provides integrated communication workshops for Leadership in Global Operations, and Technology and Public Policy. In this past year, WRAP has collaborated with new communication-intensive subjects in Departments of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Chemistry, and Brain and Cognitive Sciences, as well as the MIT Sloan School of Management, and is working with the Department of Materials Science and Engineering to craft their new CI subject, 3.010 Structure of Materials. Throughout the year, WRAP offers workshops outside of CI-subjects as well, such as a workshop on poster presentations to students in the MIT Energy Initiative, and a thesis writing boot camp for graduate students in mechanical engineering. During Independent Activities Period (IAP), WRAP offers workshops in communicating science to the public, writing successful proposals, reasoning and argumentation, and research and bibliography, as well as numerous workshops on oral presentations.

WRAP lecturers collectively presented 35 conference talks, and published a number of articles this year, as well as an edited collection.

In addition, in response to killings of Black Americans by the police and other white supremacists, WRAP created a weekly reading group this summer, which studies anti-racist pedagogy, specifically in our field of composition and communication, as well as delving deeper into research by Black scholars in our field in order to make substantive changes to our teaching and our syllabi for the fall, to include more texts—both theory and model texts—by Black authors, and to ensure that our commenting practices are informed by an understanding and valuing of multiple English dialects.

WRAP's affiliated research lab, ArchiMedia, investigates how digital media is shaping professional communication practices, and how digital tools can be used (and designed) to teach professional communication.



This past year, ArchiMedia completed three multiyear, grant-funded projects. An NSF-funded multi-institutional project (with Dartmouth College, the University of Pennsylvania, North Carolina State University, and the University of South Florida) studied the effects of teaching undergraduate STEM students how to effectively peer review each other's texts. Our research identified factors that contributed to students' ability to deeply engage with each other's research articles, and to offer strategic suggestions for improvement. Notably, integrating specific instruction about genre, audience, argumentation, and discourse, as well as about the technical content, enabled students to integrate these knowledge domains in their peer reviews, and supported our instructional integration into CI subjects.

We also completed our three-year project, funded by a grant of \$240,000 from the Davis Educational Foundation, to collaborate with science and engineering faculty to produce "disciplinary reasoning diagrams" of six different STEM fields. We successfully completed reasoning diagrams for proof-based and applied mathematics, brain and cognitive science, mechanical engineering, computer systems engineering, and materials science and engineering, as well as for our home discipline of comparative media studies. These reasoning diagrams function as discipline-specific maps that visualize relationships between concepts and the reasoning patterns that connect them, and thus function to scaffold student learning and communication in the fields.

Finally, with the aid of an Alumni Funds grant, ArchiMedia has been developing Metalogon, an online tool for rhetorically analyzing speeches and oral presentations. The platform allows teachers and students to upload video recordings of presentations, and then to embed commentary on rhetorical elements, which plays back in real time.

Our primary project this year is continuing to develop an entirely new approach to the large-scale evaluation of student writing, such as for placement exams. We designed a prototype of this system three years ago, and then teamed up with a local software company (working through MIT's Technology Licensing Office) to build a working platform. Our approach uses what we call generative rubrics—genre-based, detailed descriptions of observable attributes in student texts, specific to the genre and content of the assignment—to partially automate the feedback process. All student texts are human evaluated, and the specific feedback is human selected, but our system reduces the human time involved by a factor of four, thus reducing costs, while generating new, detailed data about student performance.

This summer, we received funding from the Experiential Learning Opportunities Program to hire six undergraduates to help with our research and development of Axiologon and Metalogon.

### **The Writing and Communication Center**

The Writing and Communication Center's (WCC) mission is to teach communication and rhetorical skills and provide expert professional communication advice about all stages and types of writing and oral presentation to MIT undergraduates, graduate students, postdocs, faculty, staff, alumni, and spouses.

The spring semester of AY2020 was marked by exceptional circumstances. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, MIT closed its campuses on March 12, 2020, and transitioned to remote teaching and operations. In two weeks, the WCC researched, deployed, and trained staff on the most appropriate technology for working remotely in a writing center.

WCC lecturers thoroughly tested the new technology platform and procedures, and the ramp-up went smoothly. When the WCC reopened on March 30, 2021, its operations had been fully transitioned to remote teaching. For the remainder of the spring semester, all WCC consultations were online meetings, providing MIT students with one-on-one, just-in-time teaching about their diverse communication challenges, including course papers, oral presentations, CVs or résumés, theses or dissertations, and journal articles.

Overall, demand for the WCC continued to be high, despite the abrupt shift to remote conferencing and the high levels of student stress and disorientation. Compared to previous years, WCC usage was unusually low in March because of MIT's week-long shutdown, as well as in early April as students adjusted to MIT's complete shift to remote education. As clients had been accustomed to in-person WCC consultations, the WCC reached out across the Institute to broadcast that it was continuing to serve MIT's student and postdoctoral communities through online meetings. At the end of the school year, AY2020 data were consistent with WCC data from recent years.

MIT is currently exploring different configurations for in-person and remote operations in AY2021. For any of the proposed scenarios, the WCC is ready to teach remotely, as it did successfully in the spring. In AY2021, the WCC will continue providing workshops on communication topics of general interest across the Institute, as well as presentations that meet specific departmental needs. To further assist MIT students with their academic and professional success, the WCC is developing new remote workshops.

The beginning of AY2020 was marked by another important transition, a change in leadership, as the WCC's first and long-time director stepped down on June 30, 2019. Steven Strang had been the director since 1982, creating and developing the WCC to be an essential part of MIT. On July 1, 2019, Thalia Rubio, a long-time WCC lecturer, took the reins as the interim director. A new WCC director, Elena Kallestinova, will begin on July 1, 2020, and a comprehensive onboarding process is occurring as of this writing.

### **CMS/W Faculty Summaries: AY2020**

The following self-reported summaries cover the period roughly from July 1, 2019, to June 30, 2020.

#### **Ian Condry**

In November 2019, Ian Condry founded the MIT Spatial Sound Lab, which, through a collaboration with d&b audiotechnik, is a cutting-edge, community production studio in the MIT Student Center for making immersive sound projects for music, sound art, sensory ethnography, multiperspective storytelling, disability studies, data sonification, and more. With funding from the MIT Office of the Arts, he organized Dissolve Music in February 2020, a three-day spatial sound festival at MIT that included more than 30 local artists and drew over 500 audience members. He was named visiting faculty member for

a new department of creative media production at Kyoto Seika University in Japan, and he released his first album *Hang Time Surf Electronica* under the artist name Leftroman.

### **Sasha Costanza-Chock**

Sasha Constanza-Chock published the book *Design Justice: Community-Led Practices to Build the Worlds We Need*. Constanza-Chock left CMS/W this year to become a research scientist at the MIT Media Lab and a faculty associate with the Berkman Klein Center for Internet and Society, Harvard University.

### **Paloma Duong**

Paloma Duong has been finishing her book, *Portable Postsocialisms*, and submitting book proposals to academic presses. She has presented this research at several venues, such as: the Modern Language Association (MLA), Columbia University, and Dartmouth College. She submitted a peer-reviewed book chapter, “Images of Ourselves: Portable Postsocialisms and Cuban Mediascapes,” forthcoming in English and Spanish translation in 2021, and published a review essay in *Revista Hispánica Moderna*. She also created a new class for the advanced Spanish program, 21G.735 Advanced Topics in Hispanic Literature and Film: Apocalyptic Fictions in/and Latin America, was elected to the MLA Cuba and Cuban Diaspora Forum Committee (the main professional group in her field), and has been serving in the Diversity and Inclusion working group at CMS/W.

### **D. Fox Harrell**

D. Fox Harrell’s work with the MIT Center for Advanced Virtuality, on *In Event of Moon Disaster* using a deepfake of Richard Nixon, was featured in *Popular Mechanics*. He continues his work as PI of the ICE Lab.

### **Heather Hendershot**

Heather Hendershot procured a contract with University of Chicago Press for a book on media coverage of the Chicago Democratic Convention of 1968, working on it during a year at the Stanford Humanities Center. She also published two pieces in the *Washington Post*, and her essay on Mayor John Lindsay’s use of local radio and television appeared in the book *Television History, The Peabody Archive, and Cultural Memory*.

### **Eric Klopfer**

CMS/W head Eric Klopfer was elected as a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, in recognition for his research on computer games and simulations for building understanding of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. He is also the director of the MIT [Scheller Teacher Education Program/ Education Arcade](#).

### **Helen Elaine Lee**

Helen Lee is the author of *The Unlocked Room*, a novel about the lives of a group of people incarcerated in two neighboring US prisons, and *The Hard Loss*, a novel about a DNA exoneree’s first week of freedom after 24 years of incarceration for a crime he did not commit. Her new book *Pomegranate* will be published by Atria, a division of Simon and Shuster.

### Tom Levenson

Tom Levenson published “The Truth About Isaac Newton’s Productive Plague” in the *New Yorker*, helping connect this year’s experience of the coronavirus with his 2010 book *Newton and the Counterfeiter: The Unknown Detective Career of the World’s Greatest Scientist*.

### Alan Lightman

Alan Lightman was announced as an upcoming author in a series of books to be published together by MIT Press and Candlewick Press; his contribution is slated to be a picture book about space. He also published a popular article for the *Atlantic*, about “the chance to choose a less hurried life” in the coronavirus era.

### Seth Mnookin

Seth Mnookin was on a Guggenheim Fellowship for the past year, although he remained very involved with the Graduate Program in Science Writing (GPSW) and the Communications Forum. Despite serious budgetary challenges, the GPSW was able to once again secure a minimum of \$55,000 in funding for seven students for this academic year. In his personal work, he continued to work on his ongoing book project and wrote for outlets including the *New York Times Book Review*. With the MIT News Office, he also discussed “COVID-19 and the public understanding of science.”

### Nick Montfort

Nick Montfort studies creative computing and develops computational art and poetry in the form of computer-generated books and digital projects, often collaboratively. Montfort continues to edit two book series, *Using Electricity* (Counterpath) and, with Ian Bogost, *Platform Studies* (MIT Press). His micropress Bad Quarto published an issue of *Taper* in AY2020. He also heads the [Trope Tank](#).

Montfort published a dozen poems and gave invited talks in several contexts, including an international online art workshop (conducted in Spanish), a talk for Chinese high school students, talks in computer science and computational linguistics, literary presentation, and a keynote address at a computational creativity conference. A collaboration with Roderick Coover and Adam Vidiksis was presented in 2019: *The Altering Shores*, 360-degree/VR vignettes and four-screen video performance with live music. Montfort developed computer-generated texts for this piece. Montfort had work shown in three group exhibits and curated the online exhibit of digital images, *Post Hoc*.

### Jim Paradis

Jim Paradis’s new course CMS.375 Reading Climate Through Media, which jibes with the MIT School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences efforts to teach climate change from a humanities perspective, was featured in MIT News. He now also serves as faculty mentor and collaborator for a CMS/W research group called the [Civic Design Initiative](#) (new starting AY2021).

### **Lisa Parks**

Lisa Parks accepted an appointment at the University of California at Santa Barbara beginning July, remaining this year with CMS/W in a visiting professor capacity as she supervised the completion of her advisees' theses and the [Global Media Technologies and Cultures Lab](#).

### **Justin Reich**

Justin Reich's work with colleagues in the [Teaching Systems Lab](#) focused on large-scale field experiments, online anti-racism training for teachers, digital clinical simulations for teachers, and support for educators during the pandemic's emergency pivot to remote teaching. In the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, he published a three-year study of behavioral interventions conducted in 250 massive open online courses over three years at Harvard, MIT, and Stanford. He released a new MOOC for teachers on edX, 0.503x *Becoming a More Equitable Educator: Mindsets and Practices* with over 5,000 registrants. He led the development of a new, open-source platform for digital teaching simulations. During the pandemic, he was active in supporting educators in the transition to remote learning. An analysis of state remote education policies (available [here](#)), was downloaded over 7,000 times.

### **Paul Roquet**

Paul Roquet taught his courses on digital media in Japan and South Korea and Japanese literature and cinema in the fall before going on research leave in the spring to finish his book on Japanese VR. A special issue he co-edited of the journal of *Visual Culture* on debates surrounding VR empathy and immersion came out in the spring, including his essay exploring the role of negative emotion in public attitudes toward game developers. His article on the history of virtual audio and stigma surrounding headphone listening appeared in the journal *Sound Studies*. Before the shutdown he gave invited talks on VR and animation at the University of London Bickbeck, the University of East Anglia, the University of Sheffield, and Cornell University.

### **T. L. Taylor**

T. L. Taylor was honored to receive a book award from the American Sociological Association for *Watch Me Play: Twitch and the Rise of Game Live Streaming* (Princeton, 2018). She also became a MacVicar Faculty Fellow. In addition to a number of invited speaking engagements in the United States and Europe, she undertook an extensive trip to China where she gave lectures to both academic and industry audiences, as well as holding closed door conversations with a number of game developers and e-sports companies. Her work with the organization she co-founded and co-directs, AnyKey (focused on diversity and inclusion in gaming), continued with several strong projects, most notably the hiring of a postdoc to produce an open access curriculum on "Inclusion 101." She continues to serve on the board of advisors for Riot's Scholastic Association of America and was a visiting researcher at Microsoft Research New England.

**William Uricchio**

William Uricchio (together with Katerina Cizek) co-authored *Collective Wisdom: Co-Creating Media within Communities, across Disciplines, and with Algorithms* (published on MIT's PubPub, and forthcoming from the MIT Press), and he spoke about co-creation at the Alliance for the Arts in Research Universities, and at venues in Budapest, Hartford, and Amsterdam, among others. He was appointed as a fellow at the UK Leadership Summit on the Future of Story, and spoke about alternate narrative forms in Berlin, Amsterdam, and Madrid. Uricchio is PI of the [Open Documentary Lab](#) and the Co-Creation Studio, and received research grants from the MacArthur and Ford foundations and the Dutch government.

**Eric Klopfer**

**Head, Comparative Media Studies/Writing**