Comparative Media Studies/Writing Program

Overview

2014–2015 was an eventful year at Comparative Media Studies/Writing (CMS/W). T.L. Taylor, a scholar of Internet and game studies, was promoted to professor. Both Sasha Costanza-Chock and Seth Mnookin are now associate professors (without tenure); the former has made his name studying communication tools and practices within social movements, while Mnookin continues to produce award-winning non-fiction with a focus on science writing. Mnookin has also taken on the role of assistant director of the MIT Communications Forum.

Several CMS/W faculty members earned prestigious fellowships, using some or all of this past year to pursue advanced projects.

Professor Fox Harrell was selected as a fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University, and he supported that fellowship with a Lenore Annenberg and Wallis Annenberg Fellowship in Communication. Vivek Bald, associate professor of digital media and writing, continued work on his "Bengali Harlem/Lost Histories" project as a Charles Warren Center Faculty Fellow at Harvard University. Professor Heather Hendershot became a fellow at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, where she pressed ahead on her upcoming book on William F. Buckley.

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. CMS/W students understand the dynamics of media change, and they help shape the future by engaging with media industries and the arts in a time of rapid transformation. They are also practitioners and artists who can work in multiple forms of contemporary media.

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

The CMS/W approach to humanities and arts education:

- 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 upon 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

Undergraduate Comparative Media Studies Major

Now in its seventh year, the CMS undergraduate major enrolled 32 students, including 12 students in the 21E/S (Humanities and Engineering/Science) joint major and eight double majors. Of this group, 14 were women. Twelve majors graduated in AY2015, which brings to 96 the number of students who have graduated from the CMS undergraduate program from its inception as an experimental major. In 2015, CMS had six minors and 119 concentrators. During AY2015, CMS sponsored 60 Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) positions for pay or credit, and another 22 over the 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, Amazon, and the Congressional Quarterly; others have pursued studies in theater arts, fine arts, or law. Many have gone on to graduate programs in the US and abroad.

Graduate Program

In 2015, the CMS graduate program received 107 applications and admitted nine students, including two from an underrepresented minority, both of whom received Diversity Fellowships from the Office of the Dean for Graduate Education. The program awarded 11 master's degrees; one of these master's recipients will pursue a doctoral degree at MIT HASTS; some of the others have taken employment at companies such as ESL–Turtle Entertainment, the *Texas Tribune,* and the MIT Media Lab.

Undergraduate Writing Major

In 2015, six writing majors received degrees. Thirteen students majored in writing, including two students in the 21E (Humanities and Engineering) joint major and six double majors. In addition, during AY2015 Writing had 14 minors and 92 concentrators. Writing offered four UROP positions during the academic year. Writing majors have gone on to careers in journalism, fiction writing, education management, consulting, business analysis, technical writing, and public information.

Graduate Program in Science Writing

In 2015, the Graduate Program in Science Writing admitted seven students from among 43 applicants, including one underrepresented minority, who was awarded a Diversity Fellowship from the Office of the Dean for Graduate Education. Two students received Taylor/Blakeslee Fellowships from the Council for the Advancement of Science Writing. Eight students graduated from the program; these graduates now hold jobs at places like the Broad Institute, Harvard University, Earthwatch, and *Grist* magazine.

CMS/W Research Groups

MIT Center for Civic Media

The MIT Center for Civic Media has charted a path toward informed, public-spirited innovation around the topic of information and citizen engagement. Over the last seven years, the center has served as a bridge between the MIT Media Lab, with its history of technology innovation, and the CMS/W program, a leader in the field of new media scholarship. This partnership is set to evolve this year, as the second of two major grants from the Knight Foundation comes to completion.

The center has combined fieldwork, scholarly practice, and technological experimentation to explore new approaches to data visualization, civic storytelling, community engagement, and online advocacy. Center staff and students work hand-in-hand with diverse communities of researchers and practitioners to collaboratively create, design, deploy, and assess media tools, technologies, and practices that foster civic engagement and political action. The center is a hub for the study of these technologies and practices, partnering with other local academic and journalistic institutions such as the *Boston Globe,* Harvard University's Berkman Center for Internet and Society and Nieman Foundation for Journalism, Emerson College's Engagement Lab, and international partners such as the iHub, an innovation hub and hacker space in Nairobi, and the government of Minas Gerais, a state in southeastern Brazil.

In addition to the successful launch of an innovative reporting platform called FOLD, this year saw two especially notable accomplishments from the CMS/W side of the center. Faculty and students made great leaps forward with Promise Tracker, a tool deployed in Brazil that allows citizens to compare promises made in political campaigns with what actually happens after elections; another set of faculty and students launched the Out for Change Transformative Media Organizing Project, which culminated in a 66-page strengths/needs assessment of LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer) media work in the United States.

Second-year CMS graduate students affiliated with the center produced ambitious theses on topics such as gender bias in the high-tech labor market and creativity in the Chinese tech community. The center also continues to organize and host 15 to 20 events each year, including hackathons and the semimonthly "Civic Lunch" visiting speaker series. All events are open to the public and routinely attract between 40 and 100 attendees.

Creative Communities Initiative

The Creative Communities Initiative (CCI), begun in fall 2013, uses ethnographic fieldwork to explore communities that link online and offline worlds to offer new solutions to old problems. CCI students and faculty conduct research on a diverse range of creative communities focusing on media, leisure, and social transformation. Examples include new developments in musical creativity and business, video streaming as a global media phenomenon, transmedia comic book artists, and ghost workers in Africa. Principal investigators Ian Condry and T.L. Taylor are joined by several CMS graduate student research assistants.

Education Arcade

The Education Arcade explores the potential of games and simulations as media that support learning both in and out of the classroom. This year, with support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, research continued on Radix, a multi-player online game created by the Education Arcade that supplements learning in high school STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) topics. In conjunction with MIT's Comprehensive Initiative on Technology Evaluation, it has undertaken the creation of a framework to evaluate the use of educational technologies in the developing world. The Education Arcade is collaborating with colleagues from the Indian Institute of Technology (Gandhinagar) in this effort.

Working with colleagues in the Scheller Teacher Education Program, the Education Arcade continued developing several tools that enable students to learn programming and system thinking through creating their own applications. These tools include StarLogo Nova, a web-served tool for building 3D simulations; TaleBlazer, which facilitates the creation of location-based mobile games; and GameBlox, an all-purpose game development tool. These projects have all involved contributions from UROP students, computer science master's students, and research assistants in the CMS/W master's program.

With funding from the Arthur Vining Davis Foundation, and in partnership with the public schools of Lynn, Massachusetts, the Education Arcade has explored the use of commercial video games in high school humanities curricula. Sandbox Summit, a conference hosted annually by the Education Arcade, continues to open up new dialogues between academics and developers of children's media—whether print, broadcast, software, or toys. This year's event drew 200 participants. Recently, the Education Arcade became a founding member of the Higher Education Video Game Alliance, a consortium that will play a prominent role in advancing the field of academic game studies and game education.

MIT Game Lab

As part of its mission to develop new approaches to applied game design and construction, the MIT Game Lab devoted its efforts this past year to providing tools and opportunities to develop games for diverse audiences.

The seven courses offered by the Game Lab, in conjunction with the lab's research and development opportunities, have maintained MIT's standing within the *Princeton Review's* top 10 schools for undergraduate or graduate study of game development for a sixth year running.

The Game Lab began its first collaboration with Shenkar College of Tel Aviv, Israel, this summer with a six-week purposeful game development workshop held at MIT. Undergraduates from MIT and students in Shenkar's postgraduate game design program worked together to create four games based on the theme of "home."

With colleagues in the Scheller Teacher Education Program and Education Arcade, the MIT Game Lab has created curriculum for MITx on Edx (11.126x Introduction to Game Design) as well as a summer workshop on designing games for learning for Chinese youth visiting US colleges. The summer workshop is supported by a private company, Excelorators.

In fall 2014, the MIT Game Lab co-hosted the Boston Festival of Indie Games for the third year in a row. More than 3,000 people attended the event to see games that had been developed by 300 invited developers and studios, giving students direct access to practitioners in game development. Covered in the national media, the event positions MIT and the MIT Game Lab as a center for independent game development.

HyperStudio

During AY2015, HyperStudio grew the user base of Annotation Studio, its educational web-based annotation project, to more than 6,000 users at more than 100 universities, colleges, community colleges, and high schools in the US and abroad. HyperStudio also set up site-specific installations of Annotation Studio for 20 institutions, including Harvard University, Vassar College, Barnard College, Hofstra University, Wellesley College, and Stony Brook University. The project was funded through a National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Digital Humanities Implementation grant (principal investigator James Paradis, co-principal investigator Kurt Fendt). Because the project is open source, several institutions have been able to integrate Annotation Studio into their own projects, including Hofstra University's Melville Electronic Library. Annotation Studio was presented at invited talks at the annual Wikimedia/UNESCO conference "Shaping Access" in Berlin, the Digital Humanities Conference in Berlin, the annual iAnnotate conference in San Francisco, MELCamp at the Educational Annotation Symposium at MIT, and at peer-reviewed conferences such as the Chicago Digital Humanities Colloquium, HASTAC, and New Media Consortium.

In May, another HyperStudio research project, the mobile art discovery app called "Artbot" (principal investigator Kurt Fendt), funded through a grant from a private donor, was completed and transferred to a commercial company, Trill, for further public growth and sustainability. The project was presented at the annual Museums on the Web Conference in Chicago and published in its peer-reviewed online journal under the title "Playful Engineering: Designing and Building Art Discovery Systems," co-authored by Fendt and research assistants Liam Andrew and Desi Gonzalez.

Another HyperStudio project, the Comédie-Française Registers Project (principal investigator Jeffrey Ravel, co-principal investigator Kurt Fendt), a collaboration with MIT's Department of History, Harvard University, and the Universities of Paris IV (Sorbonne) and Paris X (Nanterre), completed the data extraction of 113 seasons of daily ticket receipt registers (1680–1793) and integrated the data with newly developed research tools and visualizations. The project was presented at workshops in New York and Paris.

HyperStudio's weekly email newsletter for digital humanities, *h+d insights,* has solidified its role as one of the key information sources in the field, with close to 400 active subscriptions. HyperStudio's Twitter account now has almost 2,000 followers.

ICE Lab

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. During the 2014–2015 academic year, the ICE Lab developed and disseminated its work in a number of ways. Notably, Professor Harrell was selected as a fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University and was awarded a Lenore Annenberg and Wallis Annenberg Fellowship in Communication, used in support of the fellowship.

A major initiative of the ICE Lab has been to conclude the five-year, National Science Foundation CAREER Award–supported Advanced Identity Representation (AIR) Project, in which Harrell is principal investigator. A central AIR Project activity has been the development of the Chimeria Engine, an artificial intelligence–based (AI) approach to modeling the dynamics of membership in social groups. Other results include systems for analyzing virtual identities, for example revealing social status or gender inequity in virtual worlds, video games, and social media.

Harrell also received a three-year QCRI-CSAIL Alliance Grant ($750,000) for the project "Understanding and Developing for Cultural Identities Across Platforms: Value-Driven Design Principles and Best Practices in a Qatari Context." This work will be accomplished within the ICE Lab.

Harrell has a pending proposal for a 29-month ($599,941) National Science Foundation STEM+C grant, "Toward Using Virtual Identities in Computer Science Learning for Broadening Participation." If funded, the project will take some of the results of the AIR Project into K-12 public schools in Cambridge to explore the efficacy of avatars in supporting computer science performance, engagement, and learning. This project pays special attention to engaging students from underrepresented groups.

ICE Lab publications have been presented at internationally recognized conferences and venues, including the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM), Association for the Advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AAAI), Digital Humanities, and Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) conferences. Findings obtained from the AI-driven analytics and computational modeling system AIRvatar were presented

at the 10th International Conference on the Foundations of Digital Games held in Pacific Grove, California; at the ACM SIGCHI 2015 Conference on Human Factors and Computing Systems in Seoul, South Korea; and at the 5th Society for the Study of Artificial Intelligence and Simulation of Behavior (AISB) Symposium on AI and Games in Kent, Canterbury, United Kingdom.

The STEM learning game Mazzy was presented and demonstrated, together with Exigent, a computer vision–driven automated avatar generation system, at the Conference on the Foundations of Digital Games conference. Other publications from cross-institutional collaborations include Swing Compass, an interactive system transforming tablet computers into AI-driven reflective devices, presented at the 10th International Conference on Persuasive Technology held in June 2015 in Chicago.

Mobile Experience Lab

The MIT Mobile Experience Lab (MEL), directed by Federico Casalegno, associate professor of the practice, 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.

This past year, MEL established an international observatory and conducted visual and ethnographic research to investigate millennials' behaviors, attitudes, and expectations in cities. Through its redesign of the MIT Public Service Center, MEL is investigating how digital and tangible media can improve human interaction in physical spaces. MEL is also prototyping a series of wearable devices to explore how wearable computing can promote safety in work environments.

MEL has also explored the potential of immersive virtual environments in the context of collaborative spatial design. In order to understand how people communicate with each other and interact with immersive interfaces, the group designed and implemented a prototype that allows users to collaboratively design a layout, using the virtual-reality head-mounted display Oculus Rift, and hand tracking, so users can use natural hand gestures to interact with the interfaces. The group's design process focused on the collaboration between a user and an expert, in which an expert helps a user solve spatial design tasks and make decisions through a shared virtual environment; this concept was explored in the example context of purchasing items of furniture and placing them in a room layout with the help of a design expert.

MEL organized two design workshops. One was on the theme of retail innovation, researching how mobile devices and contextual media change the retail experience in the physical space; the other researched the relationship between technologies and material, exploring how interactive technologies could foster interaction with paper, ceramic, and textile products.

Open Documentary Lab

The MIT 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 courses, workshops, a fellows program, public lectures, experimental projects, and research, 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 currently has two graduate students and four faculty affiliates (Vivek Bald, Sasha Costanza-Chock, Christine Walley, and Hanna Rose Shell). It is engaged in collaborations with the Sundance Institute, Tribeca Film Institute, and National Film Board of Canada, and has attracted the interest of the MacArthur and Ford foundations.

The lab hosted a MacArthur-funded convening in October, "The New Reality: Exploring the Intersection of New Documentary Forms and Digital Journalism." In the daylong event, 50 leading digital journalists, documentarians, and media scholars from institutions such as the *New York Times,* the *Guardian,* the BBC, and *Frontline* met to discuss topics ranging from new technologies in a changing media landscape to new participatory media approaches.

ODL continued to develop Docubase, a curated, interactive database of the people, projects, and tools transforming documentary in the digital age. It launched two new sections at the Sundance Film Festival: tools and lab. The lab includes interviews, post mortems, and project documents such as wireframes, mood boards, and images of the production process, with the goal of opening up the process for makers and scholars.

The lab's competitive fellowship program continued into its second year and included multiple Emmy Award winner Kat Cizek, *Frontline* executive producer Raney Aronson, war photographer and artist Karim Ben Khelifa, and interactive documentary pioneer David Dufresne.

ODL wrapped up its yearlong investigation of the intersection of interactive documentary and digital journalism, and will publicly launch its report at the Online News Association conference, the leading digital news gathering. Produced by William Uricchio and Sarah Wolozin, together with research assistants Sean Flynn, Lily Bui, and Deniz Tortum, the report is called "Mapping the Convergence of New Interactive Documentary Forms and Journalistic Practice." The MacArthur Foundation commissioned the report.

With Tribeca Film Institute, ODL hosted a conference in October for people working in the interactive documentary field to explore ways to measure and define the social impact of interactive and participatory documentaries. A series of meetings and a final report followed.

Sponsored by the MIT Center for Art, Science and Technology, ODL hosted a six-part lunchtime lecture series featuring its fellows, including artist Lara Baladi and interactive documentarian Suvi Helminen.

ODL presented its work at numerous international venues this year, including lectures and workshops at film festivals in Prague, La Rochelle, Amsterdam, Berlin, Krakow, Budapest, Montreal, and Toronto.

Graduate student Deniz Tortum ran Docubase and wrote several case studies, one of which had several requests to republish in other venues. Together with graduate student Beyza Boyacioglu, Tortum attended Sundance and wrote articles and case studies on New Frontier artists as part of the MIT-Sundance Creating Critics Program. Boyacioglu continued to work on Professor Bald's *Lost Histories* interactive documentary.

ODL's participation in the visiting artist program culminated with visiting artist Katerina Cizek's project launch at HotDocs and a panel at MIT titled "The Art, Ethics and Technology of Interactive Documentary Co-Creation."

ODL continued to host many public events throughout the year intended to inform and inspire faculty, researchers, students, and the local Cambridge and Boston communities. Guest speakers included Brian Winston, Philip Napoli, Bjarke Myrthu, and other prominent makers and thinkers.

Trope Tank

The Trope Tank, directed by Associate 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. A focus this year was Renderings, a project to translate computational literary work from around the globe into English. The lab continues to host the monthly meetings of the local interactive fiction club, the People's Republic of Interactive Fiction.

Work in the lab resulted in several creative projects being released, including Megawatt. Three new Trope Reports (technical reports) were issued:

> TROPE-14-01 - New Novel Machines: Nanowatt and World Clock (Nick Montfort)
>
> TROPE-14-02 - Stickers as a Literature-Distribution Platform (Piotr Marecki)
>
> TROPE-15-01 - Textual Demoscene (Piotr Marecki)

The lab's equipment and researchers supported an event at the MIT Museum, class visits, and a visit by people at @party, the Boston Area demoparty. The Renderings and Slant projects proceeded, resulting in further translations from other languages of computational literature and a better-integrated story generation system. In the Renderings project, the Trope Tank hosted Robert Pinsky, Marc Lowenthal, David Ferry, and John Cayley.

Montfort gave workshops on creative programming at the New School in New York City and in Saint Petersburg and Moscow.

Academic Support Centers

Writing, Rhetoric, and Professional Communication

July 1, 2015, marks the first anniversary of Writing, Rhetoric, and Professional Communication (WRAP), a teaching and research group within CMS/W that collaborates with other MIT faculty and departments to teach written, oral, and visual communication to more than 4,000 students per year in more than 100 communication-intensive (CI) subjects. WRAP also teaches the foundational writing subjects (CI-HWs) in CMS/W. WRAP is devoted to teaching students how to analyze and produce effective communication. It is led by Director Suzanne Lane and Associate Director Andreas Karatsolis.

In its first year, WRAP has successfully integrated the teaching staff from the former Writing Across the Curriculum and Foundational Writing programs, creating a new organizational structure and mechanisms for greater pedagogical coherence across the communication requirement. WRAP now guides MIT students from their online pre-freshman essay exam through their four required communication-intensive subjects and, in some cases, into their graduate education. This year, WRAP taught its first full graduate subjects, 21W.800J Business Writing for Supply Chain Management and 21W.801J Thesis Writing for Supply Chain Management. WRAP also has been collaborating with dean for graduate education Christine Ortiz to develop online communication instruction modules for graduate students.

With the aid of both a d'Arbeloff grant and an alumni funds grant, WRAP for the first time developed and deployed a half dozen online modules for communication instruction in engineering project laboratory subjects, specifically 3.014 Materials Laboratory and 10.26/27/29 Chemical/Energy/Biological Engineering Projects Laboratory. With this project, WRAP collaborates with engineering faculty to analyze disciplinary discourse and rhetorical conventions in common engineering genres, such as journal articles, progress reports, slide presentations, and poster presentations. The modules teach students how to analyze published literature in their field and how to compose professional communication. This project has broken new ground in integrating technical and communication pedagogy. WRAP created "reasoning diagrams" that help students understand the underlying patterns of thought in engineering research, use that knowledge to develop different genres, and then communicate these research ideas to various audiences. This work was recently presented in Limerick, Ireland, at the professional communication conference ProComm 2015. WRAP also developed extensive assessment for these modules, using an instrument that measures student growth in disciplinary understanding, rhetorical awareness, and habits of mind. On these measures, students showed significant increases in all areas, with a remarkable 125% increase in their understanding of disciplinary communication knowledge.

In fall 2015, WRAP opened its new research lab, ArchiMedia, which investigates how digital media is shaping professional communication practices and how digital tools can be used (and designed) to teach professional communication. Currently funded by the Qatar Foundation, ArchiMedia has one CMS/W graduate research assistant and four ongoing research and design projects. The first, an analysis and taxonomy of the

emerging genre of graphical abstracts, was presented at SIGDOC 2015 and published in the proceedings. The second is a collaboration with the Climate Feedback project, housed at the University of California, Davis, to build an online tool for analyzing articles on climate change in the popular press through both scientific and rhetorical lenses. By the fall, WRAP anticipates it will finish both the structure of the rhetorical lens and a pedagogical unit that can be used in high school or introductory college courses on either rhetoric or environmental science. WRAP's third project, based on its ongoing rhetorical analysis of how students use sources, is an online tool (NORA) for teaching students to paraphrase effectively. The fourth project, Metalogon, is an online tool for rhetorically analyzing speeches and oral presentations. Working prototypes of both NORA and Metalogon have been tested in classrooms.

The Writing and Communication Center

The Writing and Communication Center (WCC) offers free professional advice to MIT undergraduate students, graduate students, and postdocs. The WCC is staffed completely by communication experts who are all MIT lecturers, published writers, and experienced college classroom teachers, and who have worked extensively at MIT for many years. WCC lecturers know the expectations and genres of all of the fields taught here.

During AY2015, 1,139 unique clients (1,019 in AY2014) consulted the Writing and Communications Center 3,019 times (3,524 in AY2014). Of those clients, 580 (51%) were non-native speakers of English (68% in AY2014), and 58 (5%) self-identified as bilingual (77 and 7% in AY2014).

Percentages of Clients and Visits by Client Type, AY2015

	Unique clients		Client visits	
	AY2014*	AY2015**	AY2014[†]	AY2015[‡]
Undergraduate students	29%	32%	21%	21%
Graduate students	49%	49%	53%	61%
Postdocs	22%	15%	23%	19%
Visiting scientists, unidentified	2%	4%	2%	0%
All ESL clients	68%	51%	71%	70%

*N=1,019, **N= 1,139, † N=3,524, ‡ N=3,019

Additional Services, AY2015

- WCC director Steven Strang again ran biweekly meetings of the MIT Writers Group, with four to 10 people attending each session, including undergraduate students, graduate students, staff members, and lecturers. Strang began the group in 2002.

- Throughout the academic year and including Independent Activities Period (IAP) 2015, Strang and several Writing Center lecturers worked with the Graduate Student Council's "Dissertation Boot Camps."

- Since IAP 2010, WCC has taught 21W.794, a three-credit graduate writing course for students who fail the scientific and engineering writing skills test. For the fifth straight year, lecturer Pamela Siska taught all sections of this course, with advice from and supervision by Strang. (Those graduate students are not included in the statistics above.)

- During the spring 2015 term, WCC taught 21W.799, a three-credit graduate writing course for students unable to take 21W.794. Strang designed the course and provided advice and supervision to Siska.

- During IAP 2015, the center once again sponsored a workshop, "How to Write an Effective Abstract," led by lecturer Thalia Rubio.

- During AY2015, the center sponsored several talks by lecturer Marilyn Levine, including workshops for Political Science and Architecture on thesis writing.

Survey Results

The center uses the same seven-point Likert scale used for course evaluations; the key statement is "This session was very helpful," and respondents can circle any number from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 7 ("strongly agree"). For the second year in a row, WCC's lecturers earned a 6.73 rating from the clients on the anonymous survey.

Writing and Communication Center Anonymous Survey Results, AY2015, with percentage point difference over prior year (if any) shown in parentheses

Statement	7	6	5	4
This session was very helpful.	83%	13%	3%	0
I learned something new about writing or oral presentation.	79% (–2)	14%	4% (–1)	1%
Because of this session, I can handle a similar writing/speaking situation better next time.	79% (–1)	15% (+1)	5% (+1)	1%

Note: 7=Agree strongly, 1=Disagree strongly

Faculty Award and Publication Summary

Vivek Bald

Awards

Association for Asian American Studies Book Award, History

Charles Warren Center Faculty Fellowship, Harvard University

Publications

"American Orientalism," *Dissent: A Magazine of Politics and Culture,* Spring 2015.

"South Asian Muslims in New York," *New York State Archives Magazine* 13 (5): 20–24.

Federico Casalegno

Articles

"EMG-Based Biofeedback Tool for Augmenting Manual Fabrication and Improved Exchange of Empirical Knowledge," Interaccion 2015 Conferencia, Vilanova i la Geltrú, Spain, Sep 7–9, 2015. With G. Bernal and D. Ahuja.

"Ask Local: Explore a New Place like Locals," HCI International 2015, Los Angeles, Aug 2–7, 2015. With C. Zaman, M. Sun, and K. Chilana.

"nRoom: An Immersive Virtual Environment for Collaborative Spatial Design," Chi UX Indonesia 2015 Connect, Bandung, Indonesia, Apr 8–10, 2015. With Zaman Cagri.

Sasha Costanza-Chock

Publications

Out of the Shadows, Into the Streets: Transmedia Organizing and the Immigrant Rights Movement. MIT Press.

"Towards Transformative Media Organizing: LGBTQ and Two-Spirit Media Work in the United States," a strengths and needs assessment by the Ford Foundation's Advancing LGBT Rights Initiative, Research Action Design, and the MIT Center for Civic Media, published by the Ford Foundation. With Chris Schweidler and the Out for Change Transformative Media Organizing Project.

Awards

Microsoft FUSE Labs 2015 Peer Economy Research Award, Principal Investigator, "Think Outside the Boss: Towards Co-Design of Worker-Owned Platforms in the 'Sharing Economy.'" $25,000 to research power structures of peer economy platforms, and to ask, "What might it look like if labor market platforms in the low-wage worker sector were free, open source, and worker-owned, instead of proprietary, extractive, and designed to reproduce the same structures of inequality that disadvantage workers in these sectors today?"

Ford Foundation Advancing LGBT Rights Initiative, Principal Investigator, "Out for Change: Transmedia Organizing Network." $250,000 to conduct a strengths/ needs assessment of media organizing capacity in the LGBTQ movement and to develop a skill-sharing network.

Junot Díaz

Publication

"A Bachata en Fukuoka," *Condé Nast Traveler,* October.

Fox Harrell

Publications

"Playing *Mimesis*: Engendering Understanding Via Experience of Social Discrimination with an Interactive Narrative Game," *Electronic Book Review,* November 2, 2014. With Chong-U Lim, Sonny Sidhu, Jia Zhang, Jason Lipshin, and Ayse Gursoy.

"Elastic Anchors for Imaginative Conceptual Blends: A Framework for Analyzing Animated Computer Interfaces," *Language and the Creative Mind,* Barbara Dancygier, Mike Borkent, and Jennifer Hinnell, eds., CSLI Publications, Stanford. With Kenny Chow.

"A Data-driven Approach for Computationally Modeling Avatar Customization Behavioral Patterns of Players," *Proceedings of the AAAI Conference on Artificial Intelligence and Interactive Digital Entertainment (AIIDE2015),* Santa Cruz, CA. With Chong-U Lim.

"Toward Avatar Models to Enhance Performance and Engagement in Educational Games," *Proceedings of the IEEE Conference on Computational Intelligence and Games (CIG2015),* Tainan, Taiwan. With Dominic Kao.

"Understanding Players' Identities and Behavioral Archetypes from Avatar Customization Data," *Proceedings of the IEEE Conference on Computational Intelligence and Games (CIG2015),* Tainan, Taiwan. With Chong-U Lim.

"Developing Computational Models of Players' Identities and Values from Videogame Avatars," *Foundations of Digital Games 2015,* Pacific Grove, CA. With Chong-U Lim.

"Toward Evaluating the Impacts of Virtual Identities on STEM Learning," *Foundations of Digital Games 2015,* Pacific Grove, CA. With Dominic Kao.

"Designing and Analyzing Swing Compass: A Lively Interactive System Provoking Imagination and Affect for Persuasion," *Proceedings of the 10th International Conference on Persuasive Technology,* Chicago. With Kenny Chow and Ka Yan Wong.

"Revealing Social Phenomena in Videogames using Archetypal Analysis," *Proceedings of the 5th AISB Symposium on Artificial Intelligence and Games.* Kent, Canterbury, England, United Kingdom. With Chong-U Lim.

"Toward Telemetry-driven Analytics for Understanding Players and their Avatars in Videogames," In *Proceedings of ACM SIGCHI Extended Abstracts on Human Factors in Computing Systems*. Seoul, South Korea. With Chong-U Lim.

"Mazzy: A STEM Learning Game," *Foundations of Digital Games 2015*, Pacific Grove, CA. With Dominic Kao.

"Exigent: An Automatic Avatar Generation System," *Foundations of Digital Games 2015*, Pacific Grove, CA. With Dominic Kao.

"Developing Social Identity Models of Players from Game Telemetry Data," *Proceedings of the AAAI Conference on Artificial Intelligence and Interactive Digital Entertainment (AIIDE2014)*, Raleigh, NC. With Chong-U Lim.

"An Approach to General Videogame Evaluation and Automatic Generation Using a Description Language," *Proceedings of the IEEE Conference on Computational Intelligence and Games (CIG2014)*, Dortmund, Germany. With Chong-U Lim.

"Stories of Stigma and Acceptance Using the *Chimeria* Platform," *Electronic Literature Organization Conference 2014: Hold the Light*, Milwaukee, WI. With Dominic Kao, Chong-U Lim, Jason Lipshin, and Ainsley Sutherland.

"The Chimeria Platform: User Empowerment through Expressing Social Group Membership Phenomena," Digital Humanities 2014 Conference, Lausanne, Switzerland. With Dominic Kao, Chong-U Lim, Jason Lipshin, and Ainsley Sutherland.

"Authoring Conversational Narratives in Games with the *Chimeria* Platform," Foundations of Digital Games 2014, Fort Lauderdale, FL. Designated exemplary paper. With Dominic Kao, Chong-U Lim, Jason Lipshin, and Ainsley Sutherland.

Awards

2014–2015 Fellowship at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University

2014–2015 Lenore Annenberg and Wallis Annenberg Fellowship in Communication (in support of Stanford fellowship)

Heather Hendershot

Publications

Intellectual Smackdown: How William F. Buckley Put Liberal America on the Firing Line, under contract at Broadside, imprint of HarperCollins, forthcoming 2016.

"Firing Line and the Black Revolution," *The Moving Image* 14 (2): 1–26.

Awards

2014–2015 fellow at Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University

Fall 2014 Joan Shorenstein Center fellowship, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University (declined)

Thomas Levenson

Publication

"Towards a Heavenly Equilibrium," *Boston Globe*, May 31, 2015.

Alan Lightman

Publications

"Nothingness," *Nautilus*, August 28, 2014.

"Attention," *The New Yorker*, October 1, 2014.

"Nothing But the Truth," *Popular Science*, April 2015.

Screening Room, Pantheon Books, February 2015.

Award

Elected to International Council of Advisors of the Asian University for Women

Seth Mnookin

Publications

"Talking to Vaccine Resisters," newyorker.com, February 4, 2015.

"One of a Kind: What Do You Do if Your Child Has a Condition That Is New to Science?" *The New Yorker*, July 21, 2014.

Awards

American Medical Writers Association Eric M. Martin Award for Excellence in Medical Writing (for "One of a Kind," *The New Yorker*)

The Best American Science and Nature Writing 2015 (for "One of a Kind")

Longform.org Best Science Longform stories of the year (for "One of a Kind")

The Best American Science and Nature Writing 2014 (for "The return of measles: Tallying the true costs of avoiding an essential vaccine," *The Boston Globe Magazine*)

Nick Montfort

Books

#! (The title is pronounced "Shebang.") Counterpath, 2014.

Artists' Books

Megawatt [246 pp. book based on Samuel Beckett's *Watt* and generated by 350 lines of Python]. Bad Quarto, 2014.

Zegar światowy [translation of *World Clock* by Piotr Marecki, 256 pp.]. ha!art, Liberatura series, 2014.

Book Chapters

"Computational Literature," in *Between Humanities and the Digital,* David Theo Goldberg and Patrik Svensson, eds. MIT Press, 2015.

Foreword to *Interactive Digital Narrative,* Hartmut Koenitz, Mads Haahr, Gabriele Ferri, Tonguc Ibrahim Sezen, and Digdem Sezen, eds. Routledge, 2015.

"Platform," in *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Digital Media*, Marie-Laure Ryan, Lori Emerson, and Benjamin J. Robertson, eds. With Ian Bogost. Johns Hopkins, 2014.

Journal Articles

"Opening a Worl in the World Wide Web: The Aesthetics and Poetics of Deletionism," *NMC Media-N: Journal of the New Media Caucus* 11:01, Spring 2015. With Amaranth Borsuk and Jesper Juul.

"The Trope Tank: A Laboratory with Material Resources for Creative Computing," *Texto Digital* 10:2, 2014. With Erik Stayton and Natalia Fedorova.

"Spars of Language Lost at Sea," *Formules: Revue Des Creations Formelles* 18, 2014. With Stephanie Strickland.

Awards and Honors

"Through the Park," *Best American Experimental Writing 2015,* Jesse Damiani, Seth Abramson, and Douglas Kearney, eds., Wesleyan University Press, 2015.

"Duels—Duets," *&NOW Awards 3: The Best Innovative Writing,* Megan Milks, ed. Northwestern University Press, 2014. With Stephanie Strickland.

James Paradis

Award

2013–2015 National Endowment for the Humanities Digital Humanities Award, Annotation Studio, $324,000

Edward Schiappa

Publications

Argumentation: Keeping Faith With Reason. Pearson Publishing, 2014. With John Nordin.

"The Development of Greek Rhetoric," in *Oxford Handbook of Rhetorical Studies,* Michael MacDonald, ed., Oxford University Press, forthcoming. Online version published January 2015: http://goo.gl/rZy5Zq

"The Phenomenal Text of Michael Moore's *Sicko*," in *Michael Moore & the Rhetoric of Documentary,* T. W. Benson & B. Snee, eds., Southern Illinois University Press, 2015. With Daniel Ladislau Horvath and Peter B. Gregg.

"Thomas S. Kuhn and POROI, 1984," *POROI: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Rhetorical Analysis and Invention* 10.2 (2014). Introduces a previously unpublished essay by Thomas S. Kuhn titled "Rhetoric and Liberation," included in the same issue.

Award

Endowed Chair: John E. Burchard Professor of Humanities, MIT

T.L. Taylor

Award

Partner for Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada Feminist in Games grant application, which received $2.5 million Canadian dollars, Jen Jenson (Principal Investigator), York University, Canada.

William Uricchio

Publications

Many More Lives of the Batman, edited with Roberta Pearson and Will Brooker. British Film Institute/Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

"Selling the Motion Picture in fin-de-siecle America," in *Selling to the Senses*, Nico de Klerk, Bo Florin, and Patrick Vonderau, eds., BFI/Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

"Replacement, Displacement and the Cultures of Obsolescence," in *Cultures of Obsolescence: History, Materiality, and the Digital Age,* Baerbel Tischleder & Sarah Wasserman, eds., Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

"Contextualizing the Apparatus: Film in the Turn-of-the-Century Sears, Roebuck & Co. Consumers Guide's Department of Special Public Entertainment Outfits and Supplies," in *Exposing the Film Apparatus: The Film Archive as a Research Laboratory,* Giovanna Fossati & Annie van den Oever, eds., University of Amsterdam Press, 2015.

"Re-Thinking the Social Documentary," in *The Playful Citizen: Power, Creativity, Knowledge,* J. Raessens, S. Lammes & R. Glas, eds., University of Amsterdam Press, 2015.

"Media Specificity and Its Discontents: A Televisual Provocation," in *From Media to Post-Media: Continuities and Ruptures,* Martin Lefebvre & Nicolas Dulac, eds., Éditions L'Âge d'Homme, 2015.

"The Residue of the National: Conditions of Production and the Transatlantic Divide," in *Transnational Mediations,* Astrid Böger & Christof Decker, eds., Winter Verlag, 2015.

"Recommended for You: Prediction, Creation and the Cultural Work of Algorithms," *The Berlin Journal* 28 (Spring 2015).

"Film, Cinema, Television… Media?" *The New Review of Film and Television* 12:3 (2014).

Edward Schiappa
Head, Comparative Media Studies/Writing