

MIT News Office

Personnel

Following the promotion of Nate Nickerson to vice president for communications, the leadership of the MIT News Office transitioned in academic year 2016. Nickerson was succeeded by Steve Bradt, who became executive director of the News Office on July 1, 2015, after five years at the head of the office's editorial group.

Simultaneously Kimberly Allen was named director of media relations and deputy director of the News Office, Sarah McDonnell was promoted to media relations manager, and Christine Daniloff was promoted to creative director.

Kathy Wren succeeded Steve Bradt as editorial director on November 9, 2015, joining MIT from the American Association for the Advancement of Science, where she had served as online news director.

Karl-Lydie Jean-Baptiste joined the News Office as media relations assistant on May 9, 2016, replacing Andrew Carleen, who left to take a communications job with MIT's Koch Institute for Integrative Cancer Research.

Total News Office staffing remained stable in AY2016 with 17 full-time employees plus one employee who is shared with Communication Production Services.

MIT News

Approximately 1,320 news stories were posted on the [MIT News](#) website from July 1, 2015, to June 30, 2016. Approximately 38% of these stories (501) were generated by News Office staff writers, interns, and freelancers, with most of the remainder contributed by other employees across the Institute who have some communications responsibilities.

MIT News received a total of 5,274,570 unique visitors in 2015–2016, an increase of 27.7% over the previous year. These visitors viewed 9,596,495 pages, an increase of 26.4%. Of the site's visitors in 2015–2016, 72.5% were new to MIT News.

Visits from outside the United States continued to grow, representing 46.7% of MIT News traffic in 2015–2016, up from 44.8% the previous year. The five nations with the greatest number of visitors to MIT News were the US (53.3%), India (4.8%), the UK (4.3%), Canada (4.0%), and China (2.1%).

Use of mobile devices to access MIT News also continued to grow in 2015–2016, with 30.7% of visits via cellphones, up from 22.9% in 2014–2015. Conversely, the percentages of visitors accessing the site via desktop computers (63.4%, down from 70.4%) and tablets (5.9%, down from 6.6%) declined.

The five most-viewed MIT News stories from July 1, 2015, to June 30, 2016, were as follows:

1. [Homeschooled with MIT courses at 5, accepted to MIT at 15](#) (posted November 16, 2015): 196,981 pageviews
2. [Computer program fixes old code faster than expert engineers](#) (posted July 9, 2015): 151,053 pageviews
3. [Shocking new way to get the salt out](#) (posted November 12, 2015): 150,050 pageviews
4. [Scientists make first direct detection of gravitational waves](#) (posted February 11, 2016): 121,985 pageviews
5. [Making 3-D imaging 1,000 times better](#) (posted December 1, 2015): 96,013 pageviews

Media Relations

The media relations group, led by Kimberly Allen, contributed significantly to the News Office's communications accomplishments in a very busy year.

Most notably, Allen and others from the News Office worked closely for two months with counterparts at the California Institute of Technology (Caltech) and the National Science Foundation (NSF) to plan for the [February 11, 2016](#), announcement of the first-ever detection of gravitational waves. That day, the NSF convened scientists from MIT, Caltech, and the LIGO Scientific Collaboration for a packed press conference held at the National Press Club in Washington, DC, to announce the confirmation of a theory put forth by Albert Einstein in 1916.

The domestic and global media response to the announcement was both enormous and overwhelmingly positive: In the United States, the announcement was posted online at 10:30 am, as the Washington press conference began, with "breaking news" alert boxes on both the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* websites, among others. The *New York Times* also sent a "breaking news" email alert to millions of subscribers. Print stories appeared the next day on the front pages of almost every major US daily newspaper, including the *New York Times* (where it was the lead story), the *Washington Post*, *USA Today*, *Financial Times*, and the *Boston Globe*.

Global news agencies also covered the news with in-depth reporting as it was announced. These included Agence France-Presse, the British Broadcasting Corporation, Agenzia Nazionale Stampa Associata, Deutsche Presse-Agentur, the Australian Broadcasting Commission, the Polish Press Agency, and the Netherlands Broadcasting Foundation.

Four months after the announcement of the initial detection of a gravitational wave, MIT led international media outreach on the world's second gravitational wave detection, which was announced [on June 15, 2016](#).

Members of the News Office's media relations team secured considerable press coverage of events from February to May 2016 associated with the centennial of MIT's 1916 move from Boston to Cambridge. They also managed communications surrounding a number of high-profile visits this year, liaising with communications colleagues representing

such visitors as US Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz ([March 4, 2016](#)); International Monetary Fund Managing Director Christine Lagarde ([March 4, 2016](#)); US Defense Secretary Ashton Carter ([April 1, 2016](#)); and US Commerce Secretary Penny Pritzker (two visits, on [September 18, 2015](#), and [March 11, 2016](#)).

The efforts of the media relations group were also key to the announcement of the City of Cambridge's approval of MIT's Kendall Square redevelopment plan, on [May 17, 2016](#).

Other major institutional news in AY2016 included:

- On [September 3, 2015](#), MIT announced steps to bolster support services on campus, including mental health resources and other campus support services. In interviews, MIT officials and students highlighted the importance of help seeking in order to reduce the stigma around needing and asking for help.
- On [September 9, 2015](#), MIT launched the first of two law clinics with Boston University to offer legal support to students in the areas of entrepreneurship and cyber law. The launch prompted reporting by both campuses' student newspapers and by local outlets and a legal trade journal.
- On [October 7, 2015](#), MIT President L. Rafael Reif announced a pilot program to reimagine the graduate admissions process and introduce a new credential, the "MicroMasters." The president and MIT faculty leaders spoke with national education news outlets and others about the possible implications of this pilot.
- On [October 21, 2015](#), MIT released a five-year plan for action on climate change. President Reif and Vice President for Research Maria Zuber spoke with reporters.

MIT currently averages an estimated 140.4 million monthly media impressions appearing each month in an average of 91 *Boston Globe* stories, 48 *Forbes* stories, 30 *New York Times* stories, and 24 *Wall Street Journal* stories.

Video

The past year continued a trend of strong viewership of MIT videos posted on the Institute's main [YouTube channel](#) (MITNewsOffice), which is managed by the News Office. A total of 51 videos were posted on our channel between July 1, 2015, and June 30, 2016, most of which were produced in the News Office.

The MITNewsOffice YouTube channel attracted 10,599,249 views in 2015–2016. As of June 30, 2016, the channel had 164,102 subscribers, an increase of 89.2% over the previous year.

The five most-viewed videos on the MITNewsOffice YouTube channel from July 1, 2015, to June 30, 2016, were as follows:

1. [Engineering a second skin](#) (posted May 9, 2016): 975,309 views
2. [A moment in time: Time capsule found during construction at MIT](#) (posted November 17, 2015): 946,612 views
3. [LIGO detects gravitational waves](#) (posted February 11, 2016): 675,251 views
4. [Ingestible origami robot](#) (posted May 12, 2016): 667,706 views
5. [Robot with human reflexes](#) (posted August 7, 2015): 359,038 views

Emergency Communications

Steve Bradt replaced Nate Nickerson this year on the command staff of the MIT Emergency Operations Center (EOC), serving as public information officer (PIO); Kimberly Allen assumed the role of deputy PIO. Together, they manage internal and external messaging during campus emergencies. Bradt and Allen have worked with others on the EOC this year to ensure more consistent staffing to manage emergency communications.

Steve Bradt
Executive Director