

Vice President for Communications

The Vice President for Communications (VPC), reporting to the Vice President in the Office of the President, is responsible for leading MIT's communications work, with the goal of using it to help MIT attract talent, serve and inspire the MIT community, and improve the Institute's reputation. The VPC manages the newly formed Office of Communications, which comprises the News Office, Communications Initiatives, Reference Publications, and MIT Copytech. The VPC is also responsible for creating a sense of shared purpose and work among the over 300 communications staff members across MIT who do not work in the Office of Communications.

The mission of the Office of Communications is to inform and inspire the MIT community, tell the Institute's story far and wide, and attract exceptional talent committed to a better world. To support its mission, the office identified the following three priorities this year:

1. Improve our understanding of the audiences we most wish to serve by synthesizing what we know about their passions, what they think of MIT, and how we can best connect with them
2. Use that new intelligence on audiences to offer highly useful and inspirational news, websites, and visitor experiences
3. Rally communications staff from across MIT through cross-departmental communications meetings, increased communication from leadership, and new opportunities for all communications staff at MIT to learn new skills and meet new colleagues

Work to address these priorities included a nationwide reputational survey to understand the public's perception of MIT, an analysis of audience behaviors on MIT's key web properties, the creation of a periodical email to provide updates to all communications staff on the office's priority projects and shared work, a redesigned [MIT Events Calendar](#), the conception of a staff position devoted to research on the sentiment and behavior of our most important audiences, and discovery work and planning for the new MIT homepage—set to launch in 2018. Projects under way include an evaluation of the visitor experience and an intercept survey on the MIT homepage to continue learning about audience sentiment.

In addition, the office created a set of key messages for use in Institute-wide communications. Data from the reputational study indicates that the more our audiences believe these messages, the stronger their attraction to MIT:

- MIT is making a better world through education, research, and innovation.
- MIT is welcoming to all.
- An MIT education integrates science and engineering with the humanities, arts, and social sciences.

- MIT graduates leaders.
- MIT is—in addition to being very serious—very fun.

Nathaniel Nickerson
Vice President for Communications

Communications Initiatives

In September, Communication Production Services was renamed Communications Initiatives (CI) and became part of the newly formed Office of Communications.

[Communications Initiatives](#) identifies and manages central Institute communications projects. We also work with organizations throughout MIT to produce high-quality communications, including websites, branding, print, social media, and email marketing. In addition, we help the MIT community leverage the MIT brand, offer presentations to keep communications staff informed about industry trends, and maintain a library of MIT photos and video clips for use by the community.

This year, CI staff worked with 95 departments on 190 projects. Of CI's projects, 70% had consultation as the advising type. The remaining advising types were referrals to creative partners, project management, CI internal projects, quick support, production, and discovery work. The most common project types were branding reviews and logo creation, websites, print materials (including brochures, postcards, invitations, and reports), and social media strategy. In addition, we hosted four presentations: user-centered design, case studies by MIT communications staff, Google Analytics, and unconscious bias in communications. A total of 222 staff members attended these events. CI continued to convene the Campus Communicators Group, Design Discussion Group, and Social Media Working Group, and this year we began to develop programming for the Info Group and the Marketing Group.

CI took the lead in managing several projects: a website and collateral materials for The Engine, the new MIT Events Calendar, an analysis of audience behaviors on MIT's key web properties, the use of Tagboard to broadcast social media posts during Commencement, and discovery work and planning for the new MIT homepage—set to launch in 2018.

Other projects CI assisted with include new websites for [Faculty Governance](#), [getfit](#), [Operations Research Center](#), and [Division of Student Life](#). Projects under way include new websites for CSAIL and the MIT Election Data and Science Lab, an employer branding campaign and new website for Human Resources, and a new website and branding for the MIT Libraries.

CI authored MIT's first social media strategy. The plan is centered on moving to an evidence-based content strategy, which allows us to progress from seeking to be heard to seeking to engage. TrackMaven, a social media analytics tool, will provide deeper internal metrics and comparative data from external organizations.

Under our management, several of MIT's main social media accounts saw notable growth over the past year:

- Facebook: 50% increase, with 997,000 followers
- Twitter: 153% increase, with 833,000 followers
- Instagram: 137% increase, with 41,000 followers

The staff of Communications Initiatives includes Danyel Barnard, senior director of Communications Initiatives; Bara Blender, communications strategist; Jenny Fowler, manager of social media strategy; Emer Garland, communications specialist; and Michael Pastore, communications specialist, who joined the team in April. Tom Pixton, communications specialist, retired in September.

Danyel Barnard
Senior Director

MIT Copytech

[MIT Copytech](#) is a full-service print and copy facility dedicated to meeting the communication needs of MIT's students, faculty, and staff.

The department had a strong financial performance for the third year in a row. In FY2018, Copytech will continue its practice of using the surplus to invest in service and equipment improvements.

In FY2017 Copytech continued to refine its diverse services and stabilize its core offerings. At the main location, Room 11-004, we marketed and grew our imprinting service, short-run envelope and letterhead press, and 3-D printer partnership. The new XEROX equipment introduced in FY2016 has been instrumental in upgrading our quality and capabilities for this highly successful service. Also, we upgraded our internal financial chargeback system and our electronic document submission process.

In our W20 location, the new HP 360 Latex technology and a larger print size capability have allowed us to produce wall murals, floor graphics, and window signage. The coming year will see a new service that produces banners that fit into a retractable stand.

The Sloan Copytech location in E52 continued its focus on managing the copyright service for course content. This center works to ensure that compliance to copyright is maintained in the creation and distribution of course content.

The copier and printer management program saw growth in FY2017. The program provides managed services for copiers and printers to departments, labs, and centers across campus. The group also manages the Athena cluster printers and the copiers in all of the library locations.

Copytech continued its community outreach by participating in several events, including the 2016 MIT Events Fair, MIT Sloan Student Information Fair, various IT Partners luncheons and conferences, and clothing and book drives. Copytech also partnered with or sponsored numerous student-run events.

In staff news, the team of Allen Veldwisch, Lee Marston, Scott Perrigo, Jason Cecilio, Cheryl Keane, and Chrissy Hudson received the 2017 President's Office Infinite Mile Award for Collaborative Teamwork. Kip Bruggeman, manager of Institute copier programs, retired after 25 years. Ryan Haggerty was promoted from administrative assistant to assistant manager of copier programs. Hieu Le was hired as a customer service representative in the copier programs area. Michael DiZio retired in December 2016.

Steven Dimond
Managing Director

MIT News Office

This has been an eventful year for MIT, with major news including Bengt Holmström winning the Nobel Prize in economic sciences ([October 10, 2016](#)), the launch of The Engine ([October 26, 2016](#)), the announcement of MIT's purchase of the Volpe Center property in Kendall Square (January 18, 2017), the impact on MIT of President Trump's travel bans ([February 3, 2017](#)), the death of Institute Professor Mildred Dresselhaus ([February 21, 2017](#)), and the third detection of gravitational waves by researchers at MIT and elsewhere ([June 1, 2017](#)).

Personnel

Total [MIT News Office](#) staffing remained stable at 17 full-time employees in FY2017, plus one employee who is shared with Communications Initiatives.

There were no changes in News Office personnel during the year, but three employees received new titles, effective April 1, 2017, in recognition of their continued strong service to the Institute:

- Abigail Abazorius was named senior media relations specialist;
- David Chandler was named Institute writer; and
- Peter Dizikes was named Institute writer.

MIT News

Approximately 1,238 news stories were posted on the [MIT News](#) website from July 1, 2016, to June 30, 2017. About 38% of these stories (475) 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 5,854,686 unique visitors in FY2017, an increase of 11% over the previous year. These visitors viewed a total of 10,805,128 pages, an increase of 12.6%. Of the site's visitors in FY2017, 72.7% were new to MIT News.

Visits from outside the United States continued to grow, representing 47.4% of MIT News traffic in FY2017, up from 46.7% the previous year. The five nations with the greatest number of visitors to MIT News in FY2017 were the United States (52.6% of visitors), India (5.7%), the United Kingdom (4.2%), Canada (3.8%), and China (2.1%).

Use of mobile devices to access MIT News also continued to grow in FY2017, with 35.5% of visits via cellphones, up from 30.7% in FY2015. Conversely, the percentages of visitors accessing the site via desktop computers (59.2%, down from 63.4%) and tablets (5.3%, down from 5.9%) declined.

The five most viewed MIT News postings from July 1, 2016, to June 30, 2017, were as follows:

1. [Researchers design moisture-responsive workout suit](#) (posted May 19, 2017), 341,930 page views
2. [Doubling battery power of consumer electronics](#) (posted August 16, 2016), 208,525 page views
3. [Inside tiny tubes, water turns solid when it should be boiling](#) (posted November 28, 2016), 120,006 page views
4. [Letter to the MIT community regarding the new administration in Washington](#) (posted November 10, 2016), 86,864 page views
5. [MIT researchers create new form of matter](#) (posted March 2, 2017), 70,699 page views

Media Relations

The News Office's media relations group found new ways to support President L. Rafael Reif's agenda, using his travel as part of the MIT Campaign for a Better World as an opportunity to reinforce MIT's interest in bettering the world through education, research, and innovation. Through this effort, the president engaged with journalists in a series of interviews in New York City; Washington, DC; San Francisco; Los Angeles; Hong Kong; Beijing; London; and Mexico City.

These interviews and meetings, staffed by News Office employees, provided President Reif with opportunities to educate journalists and, in turn, their audiences, about his vision for the future of education and for a new way to foster innovation. These sessions also allowed President Reif to share with the broader public his insights on the public benefits of openness to talent and federal funding for science.

In all, President Reif met with reporters and editors at 19 outlets, resulting in five broadcast appearances (*CBS This Morning*, *Bloomberg Technology*, *CCTV*, *BBC 4's TODAY*, and *C-SPAN's Washington Journal*) and 10 print articles, including a column in the *Financial Times*, a quote in the *Washington Post* about science funding, and two stories in *Times Higher Education*.

Also this year, the media relations group developed and implemented carefully tailored media plans in support of various high-profile events: the launch of The Engine, the signing of an agreement to redevelop the Volpe Center, Donald Trump's January 2017 travel ban and its impact on MIT community members, and the third confirmed detection of gravitational waves.

MIT now averages an estimated 69.2 million monthly media impressions, appearing each month in an average of 62 *Boston Globe* stories, 43 *Forbes* stories, 30 *New York Times* stories, and 23 *Wall Street Journal* stories.

Video

The past year saw continued strong viewership of MIT videos posted on the Institute's main [YouTube channel](#) (MITNewsOffice), which is managed by the News Office. A total of 119 videos were posted on our channel between July 1, 2016, and June 30, 2017; 46 of these were uploaded by the News Office, while 73 were pulled in from other sources.

The MITNewsOffice YouTube channel attracted 12,322,871 views in FY2017, an increase of 16.3% over the previous year. As of June 30, 2017, the channel had 257,791 subscribers, an increase of 57.1% over the previous year.

The five most-viewed videos posted on the MITNewsOffice YouTube channel from July 1, 2016, to June 30, 2017, were as follows:

- [One of the strongest lightweight materials known](#) (posted January 6, 2017), 1,199,933 views
- [System that can 3-D print an entire building](#) (posted April 26, 2017), 664,285 views
- [Fast and forceful gel robots](#) (posted February 1, 2017), 407,005 views
- [Intrepid: Methods to detect and prevent sexual assault](#) (posted June 13, 2017), 305,493 views
- [MIT Monkey Ballers build a plane for Red Bull Flugtag 2016](#) (posted September 6, 2016), 299,845 views

News Office staff have led the Institute's push into video optimized for viewing on social media. Such social videos are generally less than two minutes in length, and can readily be understood even without audio. In recent months, the News Office produced 12 videos tailored to social viewing habits and intended to illuminate MIT's distinctive culture. These social videos have garnered nearly 500,000 views on YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram.

Finally, the News Office wound down the underperforming MIT Video site in February; this step will allow us to put our video resources to better use in the service of drawing more overall video engagement.

Institute-Level Coordination

Over the past year, a key theme of the News Office's work has been our partnering with communications colleagues across MIT to give greater visibility to a much wider range of content. To facilitate this coordination, the News Office launched an editorial planning calendar that uses a web-based platform and can thus be made available to communicators outside the News Office.

This past summer, the News Office began convening the Editorial Group, a monthly meeting of communications directors and other key editorial managers from departments, labs, and centers (DLC) outside the News Office. The Editorial Group has led directly to our spotlighting some three dozen DLC-generated stories and videos on the MIT homepage in recent months, showcasing parts of the MIT story well beyond our traditional focus on peer-reviewed research. This close work with DLC-based colleagues to coordinate, edit, and prepare non-News Office content has ensured its seamless integration into our flow of homepage content.

Similarly, News Office staff recently launched a Video Group modeled on the Editorial Group. This has led to greater collaboration among video producers across MIT, and has strengthened the News Office's ability to elevate these individuals' work on its platforms. Meetings of this group have also served to share helpful information on topics such as social video best practices and optimization of YouTube channels, improving the video experience across MIT.

The News Office's monthly analytics reports, implemented shortly before the current academic year, have been continually augmented with new data, and are now widely shared across MIT. This service is providing a much clearer view of traffic patterns across media—both for those of us in the News Office and for communications staffers based elsewhere.

Finally, Steve Bradt assumed responsibility for chairing the Communications Operating Group in February 2017, and revised the group's 32-person membership to ensure that all major areas of the Institute are represented. The group's meetings have been reoriented to focus more crisply on sharing information regarding upcoming news, events, and announcements.

Steve Bradt
Executive Director