

MIT Museum

The [MIT Museum](#) had a record attendance of 169,045 visitors in FY2018, an increase of 14.5% over FY2017. This reflected a strong program of new exhibitions as well as continued growth in educational and general programs (including the Cambridge Science Festival). Linked to the general growth in visitation, the MIT Museum Store achieved sales of more than \$1 million for the first time in its history. In parallel with busy operations on its current site, the museum also advanced its planning for the move to a new building in Kendall Square. The detailed design for the new museum was completed by architects Höweler + Yoon; a financial plan for the operation of the new museum was prepared with the help of the Office of the Vice President for Finance; and fundraising for both the capital costs of the project and endowment to support the operations of the new museum continued apace. The new facility is due to be handed over to the museum for fit out in December 2020, and we anticipate an opening to the public in October 2021.

Collections

The Collections team focused special attention on digital projects and teaching endeavors in the past year. Most notable is the recent hiring of a firm to develop a new online collections portal that aims to transform public access to the museum's collections as well as support digital applications in our exhibitions and public programs. The team completed the digitization of the Clark and Forbes Collections; is in the process of completing the digitization of the Herreshoff Collection; planned "Project Vannevar" to digitize an estimated 125,000 photographs in our subject and biographical files; and initiated a pilot project with the MIT Libraries to digitize the Institute's collections of architectural student theses and drawings as part of the 2019 celebration of the Department of Architecture's 150th anniversary.

June 1, 2017 to May 31, 2018

- 2,972 new object records
- 130,536 new media records

Collections Database (Mimsy)

- 136,245 total object records
- 393,729 total media records

Public Database (Mobius)

- 47,548 total object records online
- 131,704 total media records online

The museum's public collections database Mobius had 10,866 unique users, and 109,330 page views (58% searches; 29% direct; 18% referrals including 10% referrals from the MIT Museum website; 4% social media).

The team provided classes, workshops, and tours throughout the year for more than 300 students and faculty that gave firsthand access to collections. Other highlights included the completion of a preliminary inventory of all collections, which is the first step in a comprehensive master planning exercise to enable the safe move of all artifacts in conjunction with the new museum at Kendall project; curating two special exhibitions on the photography of György Kepes; and contributions to the exhibitions *Big Bang Data* and *The Beautiful Brain: The Drawings of Santiago Ramón y Cajal*.

The team—supported by two interns, five highly skilled volunteers, seven temporary staff members, and a visiting scholar—fielded nearly 1,000 inquiries; worked on or completed the cataloging of seven major collections; arranged more than 30 loans, including four international loans of artifacts; contributed to multiple exhibitions, public programs, and tours; and participated in international conferences and other collaborative professional endeavors with museums, scholars, journalists, and researchers from around the world.

MIT Museum Studio and Compton Gallery

During the fall semester, the studio piloted course 9.S52/9.S916 Vision in Art and Neuroscience, developed by studio manager Seth Riskin, vision and computational neuroscience professor Pawan Sinha, and PhD student Sarah Schwettmann. The course shaped an educational experience in which vision science and visual art mutually inform and extend each other through technology projects suitable for public exhibition. It was supported by a Center for Art, Science & Technology Mellon Faculty Grant and was offered through the Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences. The course will be offered again in the future and is on track to become a consistent and core element of the MIT Museum Studio and Compton Gallery program.

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Center for Advanced Visual Studies (CAVS), the studio's annual spring semester course, STS.035 Exhibiting Science, taught by Seth Riskin and John Durant, examined Otto Piene's project *Centerbeam* for its pioneering interdisciplinary and collaborative methods. Inspired by this culturally significant facet of Institute history and guided by CAVS artist-visitors to the class, students contributed original projects to an interactive, environmental installation in the Compton Gallery, which opened to coincide with commencement 2018.

The growing MIT student community of studio users developed and hosted a gathering of CAVS alumni and students, a culminating event of the yearlong CAVS celebration that fostered multigenerational learning and continuing work in the area of art, science, and technology.

Exhibitions

This year's roster of exhibitions has proved to be one of the most intensive and ambitious, drawing increasing attention to the museum as a vital and integrated program within the life of the Institute.

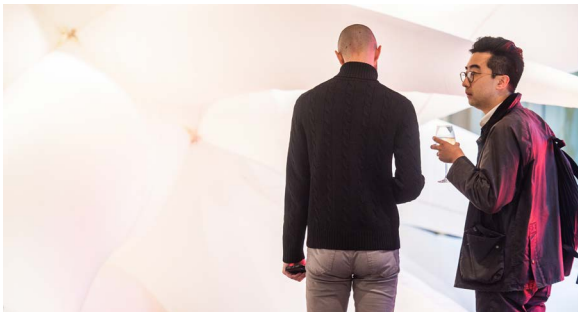
The Enemy (October 2017 to December 2017) was an innovative research and technology experiment, focusing on contemporary social issues from around the globe. It tested new modes of audience engagement (virtual reality) while fostering socially relevant conversations and building greater awareness of the museum.



Visitors experience The Enemy, a virtual reality exhibition at the MIT Museum. Photo by Karim Ben Khelifa.

Big Bang Data (October 2017 to March 2018) explored the phenomena of information explosion, the ability to visualize the complexity of the physical and energy infrastructure of the cloud, and probed the changing boundaries of privacy and security as we generate massive amounts of personal data. It included a selection of installations sourced from within the MIT community (e.g., Media Lab, Senseable City Lab), and local area data projects.

To mark the 50th anniversary of the founding of the MIT Center for Advanced Visual Studies, in February the museum opened a retrospective of selected works by CAVS research fellows, students, and faculty. The exhibition includes art installations at multiple sites within the museum and Compton Gallery. Holograms, light art, and inflatable sculptures reflect the wide range of CAVS artistic explorations and achievements that changed the social standards of art. The Kurtz Gallery for Photography exhibitions *György Kepes Photographs: From Berlin to Chicago* and *György Kepes Photographs: The MIT Years, 1946–1985*, provided original insights into the work and process of this influential artist and educator who was the founding director of CAVS.



Guests enjoy Otto Piene's Cereus during an event celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Center for Advanced Visual Studies at the MIT Museum.

Photo by Ashley McCabe.

Robots and Beyond received a full gallery face-lift, reorganizing the collection on display, reinterpreting the importance of these MIT milestones in the history of artificial intelligence, and adding a new zone highlighting the contributions of Seymour Papert's lab and the enduring influence of Lego, Mindstorms, and Programmable Bricks.

The Beautiful Brain: The Drawings of Santiago Ramón y Cajal opened in May, and was celebrated on May 7, 2018 with robust attendance by MIT faculty, neuroscientists, and the larger community of supporters. Santiago Ramón y Cajal, who made transformative discoveries of the anatomy of the brain and nervous system, is considered the founder of modern neuroscience and also an exceptional artist. These historical works are complemented by contemporary visualizations, many from MIT laboratories, bringing to view new understandings of the brain, enabled by developing technologies in the field of brain and cognitive science. The Exhibitions team collaborated in the yearlong development of the MIT components with the McGovern Institute, Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences, and the Picower Institute.



A visitor takes a closer look at one of Santiago Ramón y Cajal's drawings in The Beautiful Brain exhibition at the MIT Museum. Photo by Justin Knight.

Education and Public Programs

The museum continues to explore ways of engaging the MIT community and the public with each other and with MIT's research and innovation. This year over 30,000 MIT students, faculty, alumni, and members of the public participated in educational and public programs. Brian Mernoff, education coordinator, has shepherded the development of unique programs in collaboration with Assistant Professor Caitlin Mueller's Digital Structures Lab and Professor Ed Boyden's Synthetic Neurobiology

Group, including activities for the museum's public maker space, the Idea Hub, and the classroom. He also is overseeing the development of two new workshops for students and adult learners: one based on Professor Mounji Bawendi's quantum dots research, and the other on alumnus Nathanael Herreshoff's creative boat designs, which will be available to the public in FY2019. Jennifer Novotney, public programs coordinator, continues to manage college interns and gallery volunteers, many of whom are alumni or current students, and works directly with numerous undergraduate and graduate students to produce Girls Days (highlighting physics and environmental science this year), the Friday After Thanksgiving Chain Reaction, Grad Nights @ the Museum, and more than 50 programs during Massachusetts public school vacation weeks in February and April. Novotney created the Teen Programming Council and mentors these high school participants in the creation of public programs for their peers throughout the school year. Brindha Muniappan, programs director, has been developing partnerships with leaders of community organizations in Cambridge, Somerville, and the greater Boston area in order to co-create innovative programming for underserved youth and adults and empower more people to engage in STEM research and innovation.

Cambridge Science Festival and Science Festival Alliance

The 12th annual Cambridge Science Festival welcomed more than 100,000 people and offered close to 250 hands-on, engaging programs and events throughout the greater Boston area from April 13 to 22, 2018. More than 1,000 science and technology professionals led events, from MIT cognitive neuroscientist and professor Rebecca Saxe who engaged with comedian Eugene Mirman for our opening night event, to *Aerocene Explorer* test flights on Killian Court with MIT visiting artist Tomás Saraceno, to a teen café about the search for habitable exoplanets at the MIT Museum. The museum alone had more than 30,000 visitors in conjunction with festival programs and all festival recurring annual events showed record attendance. We are excited to build on this momentum in FY2019 and beyond.

Nord Anglia Education, the premier sponsor of the festival, completed the second year of its five-year collaboration with the festival. In addition to launching three academic challenges in Nord Anglia schools worldwide, 104 middle school students and teachers spent one week in May on MIT's campus attending workshops and taking tours, plus 70 teachers spent one week in June participating in a professional development program run by the Cambridge Science Festival staff.

In FY2018 the Science Festival Alliance (SFA) reported on the activity of its member festivals, with a total of 47 celebrating in 2017, collectively reaching more than two million people at 4,671 events. The SFA concluded work on the Science Festival Accelerator project with the launch of nine new festivals in communities with a relatively small resource base (locations included Bowling Green, KY; Downey, CA; Jackson, MS; Honolulu, HI; Mt. Shasta, CA; North Bay, Ontario; Pensacola, FL; Roswell, NM; and Topeka, KS). This two-year project was funded with a grant from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. The SFA received a \$1,056,000 three-year grant from the Simons Foundation in support of the multifaceted project Science In Vivo, a national program supporting science engagement initiatives that reach people where they already are. Eleven out of an eventual 24 teams have been selected to participate in the project as of

this writing. Finally, the SFA produced the Science Events Summit, drawing 120 public science event professionals to St. Petersburg, FL, for conference sessions and other activity spanning June 3 to 5, 2018.

Administration

The New MIT Museum at Kendall

Planning for the new exhibitions has continued throughout the year, with a focus on the detailed design of the architectural infrastructure necessary to support museum and collections galleries. Two meetings of an Institute-wide exhibitions advisory group were convened in fall 2017, assembling 20 diverse faculty to review the proposed exhibitions master plan (developed in early 2017), and to discuss the thematic direction of the new galleries and to suggest ways in which current research activities across the Institute might be transformed into experiences accessible to visitors.

The design development phase for the museum space was completed in early March. In April two tenants for the office tower were secured, and the building is being released for construction. The museum space will be handed over in December 2020, and installation of exhibitions can start at that time. The projected opening date for the new museum is sometime in the second half of 2021.

Technology

The new director of Technology and Digital Strategy, David Nuñez, conducted assessments of the museum's technical systems and made recommendations to update the infrastructure in preparation for a number of digital initiatives for FY2019, which are now reflected in the strategic plan and continuing through the opening of the new museum in 2021. The museum launched its collections application programming interface which will enable new forms of digital collaboration with other departments on campus and around the world. For example, we are planning projects with the MIT Libraries and MIT Press to integrate our unique offerings, and we will present our collections through a new online collections website in October 2018. In our galleries, we have continued to improve our capacity to implement interactive digital exhibits and are starting to systemize their deployment via an experience management system. To facilitate internal communications, we have implemented a tracking system called Zendesk. This facilitates the triaging and efficient handling of technical support and exhibition issues among our teams.

Development

The museum raised \$927,000, which included gifts to the Patrons Program and annual fund, a \$215,000 grant from an anonymous foundation to enable important aspects of planning for the new museum, \$362,620 for year one of the aforementioned Simons Foundation grant, \$194,950 for *The Beautiful Brain*, \$83,333 for year six of Science on the Street, and a number of individual gifts, some unrestricted and others designated for education and public programs or projects to process individual collections.

In addition, fundraising for the new museum continues, with a new \$1 million endowment gift received in June.

Retail and Functions

The MIT Museum Store continues to operate as a highly successful business, having experienced 26% growth year to date. The store has achieved over \$1 million in sales for the first time in the museum's history. Net profit has reached a new high, having already surpassed projections by over \$100,000, and is expected to total over \$350,000 by the close of the fiscal year.

The Functions business increased its revenue from FY2017 despite multiple exhibitions that limited the available space for events and made them logistically more challenging. Over \$147,000 was earned from functions serving 71 clients, 85% of them MIT-affiliated and 15% external, including longtime clients from Executive Education, as well as new clients from student-run groups and clubs.

Public Relations and Marketing

The museum received national and local press coverage, including TV and radio broadcast, print, and digital. *The Beautiful Brain* drew a favorable review in the *Boston Sunday Globe* by top art critic Cate McQuaid, while Jared Bowen, the host of WGBH-TV's program *Open Studio*, tweeted "just had one of the most profound museum experiences of my life," after visiting *The Enemy*.

Personnel

Aivory Mendez began work in July as the new full-time financial assistant focusing on our enterprise activities. Mendez is a graduate of Florida International University, where she majored in business administration and also earned a master of science in finance. The Administrative team was further strengthened with the hiring of Casey Hewson in October as development assistant. A graduate of the University of California, at Riverside, Hewson comes to the museum following three years with the Girl Scouts in administration and fundraising.

Daryl McCurdy joined the staff as curatorial associate of the Architecture and Design Collection in July 2017. McCurdy holds undergraduate degrees in art history and in painting from the University of Illinois, and a master's degree in design studies from the Harvard University Graduate School of Design. After 19 years of service as the registrar and collections manager, Joan Whitlow started in a newly focused role as collections manager in April 2018. Katie Porter assumed additional responsibilities for Collections with the revised title of administrative assistant to the director and Collections.

David Nuñez was hired in October as director of Technology and Digital Strategy, a vital position on the Management team. He is a graduate of Rice University with a degree in computer science and managerial studies, and he holds a master's degree in media arts and sciences from MIT.

Brian Mernoff joined the Programs team in November as education coordinator. He taught at Medford High School for four years as a chemistry teacher, after earning a master's degree in chemistry from Tufts University.

John Durant
Director