

In Medias Res

MIT COMPARATIVE MEDIA STUDIES • CMS.MIT.EDU • FALL 2006

CMS Reaches New Heights

Singapore and MIT Launch Game Lab
MacArthur Funds Second Phase of NML
C3 Brings Good Luck to China
Education Arcade Develops *Labyrinth*
Media in Transition Conference, Take 5



**Massachusetts
Institute of
Technology**



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CMS Making Media, and Making News

By Henry Jenkins and William Uricchio, CMS directors

Seeya in the funny papers!

Well, now that you mention it, yes, Comparative Media Studies was recently seen in the comics section, thanks to *Doonesbury* creator Gary Trudeau. As regular readers know, Mike Doonesbury's daughter started at MIT this fall and found herself lotteried out of a Hass-D media studies class, which could, in reality, only be Introduction to Media Studies.

Of course, nobody at MIT should be surprised to see CMS referenced in the comics section – CMS has been all over the newspaper lately. We're enjoying a wave of publicity at the moment – and the best is yet to come.

Breaking News: Singapore Gaming Agreement Inked

The biggest news is the completion of an agreement between Singapore's Media Development Authority (through the National Research Foundation) and the administration of MIT to launch a new laboratory focused on promoting innovation in computer and video games.

The five-year initiative will involve CMS in collaborations with the MIT Computer Science Program and an array of universities and polytechnics within Singapore. This project aims to promote innovation, creativity, and diversity in game design, pushing the work we have been doing through the years in the Education Arcade, the Electronic Arts Creative Leaders Program, and the SONY IAP workshops to the next level.

We will at the same time move our games-related research into a global context where we will see ongoing collaboration with top games industry professionals, researchers, and students from around the world. This news broke



CMS directors *Henry Jenkins* and *William Uricchio*

too late to be covered extensively in this issue but we hope to offer a more detailed report soon.

'Enormous Opportunities'

MIT recently announced plans to move forward with the construction of the long-delayed Media Lab annex building with the promise that CMS will join Media Arts and Sciences, the Center for Advanced Visual Studies, and other media-related programs at MIT within the new Media Lab complex. Bringing these various programs together will create enormous opportunities for collaboration and social interactions among groups previously held apart by their scattered locations.

CMS is apt to generate even more headlines with the release of the white paper that Project NML has developed for the MacArthur Foundation. The paper, "Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century," was written by

Henry Jenkins with support from Ravi Purushotma, Margaret Weigel, Katie Clinton and Alice Robison.

The C3 consortium is also likely to generate a fair amount of buzz later this term when it plays host to a conference on the Futures of Entertainment, which brings together key players from new and old media companies to explore such emerging trends as user-generated content, digital distribution of television, and transmedia extensions.

This issue of *In Medias Res* shows a range of other CMS-related breakthroughs: the unveiling of plans for *Labyrinth*, the flagship project of Learning-Games-To-Go; the move of Metamedia towards increased focus on social tagging and the semantic web; the call for submissions to the fifth (count them, five!) Media in Transition Conference focused on "Creativity, Ownership, and Collaboration in the Digital Age"; news of a CMS research group (Project Good Luck) and its efforts to better understand the way media is impacting China; the release of Henry Jenkins's new book, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, and so much more.

To make all of this happen now requires an army of faculty, administrative and research staff, post-docs, graduate students, and visiting scholars. Many of them are profiled across this issue. The vast majority of the people who are making CMS work on a day-to-day basis now were not here a year ago: most of the job lines did not exist then.

What a difference one year can make in the life of a program and what a difference this coming year will make in the life of ours!

New Books and a Blog for Jenkins this Summer

New essays appear five days a week at henryjenkins.org

CMS Co-Director **Henry Jenkins** released two books about the culture of media consumption this summer.

Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide explores the space where old and new media intersect, where grassroots and corporate media collide, where the power of the media producer and the power of the consumer interact in unpredictable ways.

Jenkins argues that struggles over convergence will redefine the face of American popular culture. He maintains that while industry leaders see opportunities to direct content across many channels to increase revenue and broaden markets, consumers envision a liberated public sphere, free of network controls, in a decentralized media environment. Sometimes corporate and grassroots efforts reinforce each other, creating close relations between media producers and consumers, and sometimes these two forces are at war, Jenkins says.



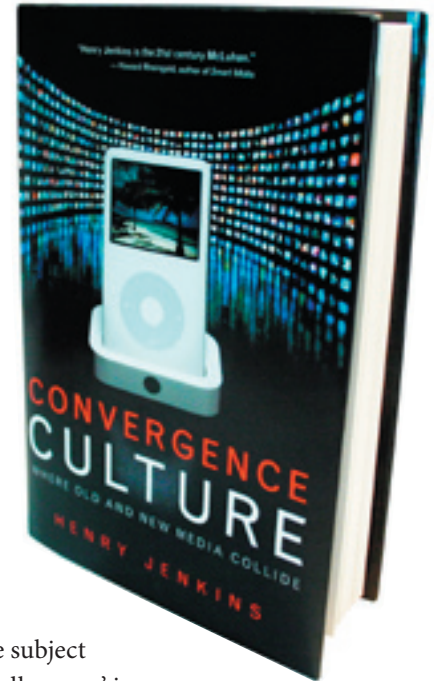
A second book, *Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers: Exploring Participatory Culture* is the first of two new collections of Jenkins' essays and talks, some previously published, some original. Bringing together the highlights of a decade and a half of research into the cultural life of media consumers, *Fans, Bloggers,*

and Gamers takes readers from Jenkins' early work defending fan culture against those who would marginalize or stigmatize it, to his more recent work, combating moral panic and defending Goths and gamers in the wake of the Columbine shootings.

Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers was designed to reintroduce Jenkins' earlier work about participatory culture to readers who may be encountering this idea for the first time in *Convergence Culture*.

Blogger and science fiction writer Cory Doctorow said, "Jenkins is one of us: a geek, a fan, a popcult packrat. He's also an incisive and unflinching critic. His affection for the subject and sharp eye for 'what it all means' is an unbeatable combination."

Jenkins accompanied the launch of these two books by starting a blog at henryjenkins.org which appears five days a week, responding to contemporary trends in media and popular culture and showcasing the full activities of CMS.



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About *In Medias Res*

In Medias Res is published three times a year by:

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Our New Look

In Medias Res has been redesigned by CMS graduate student **Geoffrey Long** (www.geoffreylong.com). The body font is Minion Pro, the headline font is Myriad Pro, and certain other splash text is set in Mrs. Eaves. Most headshot photographs are by **Dan Bersak**.

Media in Transition Conference To Explore Digital Culture

Proposals due Jan. 5, 2007

The fifth Media in Transition conference will take place April 27-29, 2007 at MIT. CMS is currently accepting proposals for papers and panels for **MiT5: creativity, ownership, and collaboration in the digital age**. Proposals are due Jan. 5, 2007. See the following for submission details and refer online to web.mit.edu/comm-forum/mit5 for updates.

Call for Papers

Our understanding of the technical and social processes by which culture is made and reproduced is being challenged and enlarged by digital technologies. An emerging generation of media producers is sampling and remixing existing materials as core ingredients in their own work. Networked culture is enabling both small and large collaborations among artists who may never encounter each other face to face. Readers are actively reshaping media content as they personalize it for their own use or customize it for the needs of grassroots and online communities. Bloggers are appropriating and recontextualizing news stories; fans are rewriting stories from popular culture; and rappers and techno artists are sampling and remixing sounds.

These and related cultural practices have generated heated contention and debate. What constitutes fair use of another's intellectual property? What ethical issues are posed when sounds, images, and stories move from one culture or subculture to another? Or when materials created by a community or religious or ethnic tradition are appropriated

by technologically powerful outsiders? What constitutes creativity and originality in expressive formats based on

sampling and remixing? What obligations do artists owe to those who have inspired and informed their work and how much creative freedom should they exercise over their borrowed or shared materials?

One source of answers to such questions lies in the past – in the ways in which traditional printed texts – and films and TV shows as well – invoke, allude to and define themselves against their rivals and ancestors; and – perhaps even more saliently – in the ways in which folk and popular cultures may nourish and reward not originality in our modern sense, but familiarity, repetition, borrowing, collaboration.

This fifth Media in Transition conference, then, aims to generate a conversation that compares historical forms of cultural expression with contemporary media practices. We hope this event will appeal widely across disciplines and scholarly and professional boundaries.

How to Submit

Short abstracts of *no more than 200 words* for papers or panels should be sent to **Brad Seawell** at seawell@mit.edu *no later than January 5, 2007*. If you are submitting a panel proposal, please include abstracts for each of the panelists' papers as well as for the panel. Email submissions are preferred, but abstracts can

be mailed to: Brad Seawell, MIT 14N-430, 77 Mass. Ave., Cambridge, MA 02139.

MiT5: creativity, ownership and collaboration in the digital age aims to generate a conversation that compares historical forms of cultural expression with contemporary media practices.

Among topics the conference might explore:

- history of authorship and copyright
- folk practices in traditional and contemporary society
- appropriating materials from other cultures: political and ethical dilemmas
- poetics and politics of fan culture
- blogging, podcasting, and collective intelligence
- fair use and intellectual property
- media literacy and the ethics of participatory culture
- artistic collaboration and cultural production, past and present
- sampling and remixing in popular music
- cultural production in traditional and developing societies
- Web 2.0 and the "architecture of participation"
- creative industries and user-generated content
- parody, spoofs, and mash-ups as critical commentary
- game mods and machinima
- the workings of genre in different media systems
- law and technological change

CMS Colloquium and MIT Communications Forum Fall 2006 Calendar

Comics: An Art Form in Transition

Thursday, Sept. 14 • 5-7 pm • Bartos

In the last 20 years, print comics have struggled toward maturity through the literate graphic novel movement. Now, that same art form is experiencing a vastly different set of growing pains on the web, raising fundamental questions about the reading experience, the functions of storytelling in society, how art forms adapt to dominant technologies and the role of space in information design. Cartoonist, teacher and author **Scott McCloud** explores these and other questions in a fast-moving visual presentation. Co-sponsors: MIT Media Lab and MIT Lecture Series Committee.

Forum: The Emergence of Citizens' Media

Alex Beam, *Boston Globe* • **Ellen Foley**, *Wisconsin State Journal* • **Dan Gillmor**, *Center for Citizen Media*
Tuesday, Sept. 19 • 5-7 pm • Bartos

In the first forum in a series asking “Will Newspapers Survive?” working journalists, media critics and digital visionaries discuss the ongoing transformation and apparent decline of American newspapers. Topics to be addressed: the aging of the newspaper reader, the emergence of citizens’ media and the blogosphere, the fate of local news and the local newspaper, news and information in the networked future.

Forum: News, Information and the Wealth of Networks

Yochai Benkler, Yale University • **Henry Jenkins**, MIT • **William Uricchio**, MIT

Thursday, Sept. 21 • 5-7 pm • 3-270

The second forum in the series “Will Newspapers Survive?”

Re-Inventing Television: Podcasting and the Future of Media

Thursday, Sept. 28 • 5-7 pm • 2-105

Chris Boebel and **David Tamés** will discuss the production of *ZigZag*, MIT’s video podcast and reflect on the evolution of broadcast media and the rise of video on the web. Chris Boebel is manager of multimedia development at MIT’s Academic Media Production Services (AMPS). His films include *Red Betsy* (2003) and *Containment* (2004). David Tamés is a producer and editor for AMPS. His work includes *The East Village*, a web-based soap opera.

Forum: Why Newspapers Matter

Jerome Armstrong, Netroots.com • **Pablo Boczkowski**, Northwestern University • **Tom Rosenstiel**, Project for Excellence in Journalism • **David Thorburn**, MIT
Thursday, Oct. 5 • 5-7 pm • Bartos

The final forum in the series “Will Newspapers Survive?”

Futures of Entertainment Fri.-Sat., Nov. 17-18 • Bartos Auditorium

As advertisers look for new ways to engage audiences, content creators search for new audiences, and audiences quest for new ways to connect with culture, the nature of what counts as “entertainment” is rapidly changing. We are seeing the blurring of aesthetic and technological distinctions between media platforms, of “advertising” and “content” and of “creator” and “consumer.” Futures of Entertainment brings together key industry leaders who are



Image by Alexandre Van de Sande

shaping these new directions in our culture. The conference will consider developments such as user-generated content, transmedia storytelling, the rise of mobile media and the emergence of social networking. Speakers include: Chris Anderson (*Wired*, *The Long Tail*), Caterina Fake (Flickr), Michael Lebowitz (Big Spaceship), Paul Levitz (DC Comics), Diane Nelson (Warner Bros. Fan Relations), Philip Rosedale (Linden Lab), and Robert Tercek (Multimedia Networks). More information coming soon.

The conference is co-sponsored by C3.

Lost Control: Marketing in the Age of Consumer Empowerment

Thursday, Oct. 12 • 5-7 pm • 2-105

Digital technologies have empowered end users, and that transfer of control – from content creators and distributors to consumers – impacts all forms of communications, including marketing. **Scott Donaton**, associate publisher and editorial director of the Ad Age Group and author of *Madison & Vine* will talk about why user-empowerment is the key trend in business, and the ways marketers are adapting to it, including the rise of branded entertainment.

The Art of the Improbable

Thursday, Oct. 19 • 5-7 pm • 2-105

Scott Foe was a member of the Dreamcast Network product development team at Sega. He joined Nokia in 2003 and currently serves as a producer for Nokia Games, where he is responsible for pushing the limits of connected mobile gaming.

New Media and Art

Thursday, Oct. 26 • 5-7 pm • 2-105

This round table is made up of leading figures in the field of media art curators, authors, network directors, and innovative developers who will address the current issues on art in the age of digital reproduction. Speakers: **Lauren Cornell**, director of Rhizome.org; **Jon Ippolito**, media artist, curator, author; and **Mark Tribe**, founder of Rhizome and professor of media arts at Brown University. CMS Professor **Beth Coleman** will moderate the panel.

Media Evangelism in the Global South: Assessments and Interpretations

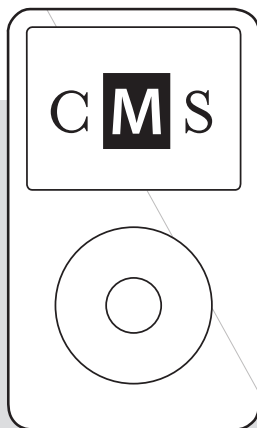
Thursday, Nov. 2 • 5-7 pm • 2-105

The phenomenal rise of evangelical Christianity in the global South during the past thirty years has been accompanied by the expanded use of new media, including radio and television. This presentation outlines an ongoing research project into the historical origins, systemic achievements, and interpretive implications of the American missionary radio broadcasting enterprise in Africa, Asia and Latin America during its formative era, 1945 to 1970. **Timothy Stoneman** is a National Science Foundation Postdoctoral Fellow in the Science, Technology, and Society program at MIT.

Mimesis, Sacrifice, and Victimhood

Thursday, Nov. 9 • 6-8 pm • 3-133

Ray Chow is Andrew W. Mellon Professor of the Humanities at Brown University where she teaches in the departments of Comparative Literature, English, and Modern Culture and Media. Chow's talk will be based on her latest book, *The Age of the World Target: Self-Referentiality in War, Theory, and Comparative Work*. Co-sponsor: Health Sciences and Technology.



Subscribe to the CMS Podcast

Can't make it to an event? Point your RSS reader to <http://cms.mit.edu/news/colloquia.xml> to subscribe to the new CMS Podcast. Download mp3s of events with Frank Espinosa, Scott McCloud and more!

Forum: The Craft of Science Fiction

Thursday, Nov. 16 • 5-7 pm • Bartos

Readings and conversation with **Joe Haldeman**, four-time Nebula Award winner and author of *The Forever War* and many other books.

Conference: Futures of Entertainment

Fri.-Sat., Nov. 17-18 • Bartos

Futures of Entertainment brings together key industry leaders who are shaping these new directions in our culture. The conference will consider developments such as user-generated content, transmedia storytelling, the rise of mobile media and the emergence of social networking. (See box, facing page.)

Men Imagining a Girl Revolution

Wednesday, Nov. 29 • 5-7 pm • tba

At various points in the twentieth century, male novelists, journalists, intellectuals, artists, editors and cultured men have become fascinated by the lives and characters of single women and their potential for prostitution and revolution. In this presentation, Foreign Languages and Literatures Visiting Professor **Sharon Kinsella** examines the media constructions of a teenage female revolt in contemporary Japan drawing from her current book project *Girls as Energy: Fantasies of Social Rejuvenation*.

The MIT Communications Forum website is at web.mit.edu/comm-forum. This calendar appears online at cms.mit.edu/events/colloquiaforums.php. For more information on upcoming events, bookmark the CMS News page at cms.mit.edu/news.

C3 White Paper Draws on Media Consumption Survey

By Joshua Green, *Convergence Culture Consortium (C3) project manager*

The C3 team was busy over the summer with the Project Good Luck trip to China (see story, page 12) and another round of white papers. These proprietary white papers include work on alternative reality games (**Ivan Askwith**), digital rights management and the moral economy (**Alec Austin**), the future of advertising systems (**Ilya Vedrashko**), mobile media (**Geoffrey Long**) and media consumption in an American dormitory (**Sam Ford**).

Ford's paper reports the results of his study of media consumption in a Boston college dormitory. Based on in-depth interviews with a number of dorm inhabitants and observations of a series of common-room media traditions, the study provides some valuable insights into the way dorm living shapes the media consumption of college students.

The study uncovers a hierarchy of media use that revolves around both ease of access and the limitations of space, finances and time dorm living imposes. Traditional platforms like music and television rise to the top, the former because of its portable and condensable format and the latter due to both the communal set-up of the dorm and the availability of content online.

The dorm experience is revealed to be one of experimentation where attitudes are set and taste cultures refined through the social interactions of communal living. These communities are active sites for what Ford refers to as media proselytizing, whereby fans capitalize on a somewhat captive but definitely curious audience to enlist new audiences for content. This proselytizing contributes to the identity

project of both the prophet and the disciple, and the study explores the extent to which peer influence changes the media consumption habits and tastes of dorm dwellers.

Ford's work is augmented by two complementary studies - consortium partner GSD&M examined a similar situation in Texas and our Sloan research team produced a quantitative analysis of over 900 responses from a GSD&M administered survey. This latter study

reveals interesting patterns in college-student attitudes towards media ownership and content sharing and speculates on the relative success of competing models of commercial download services.



<http://www.convergenceculture.org>

Convergence 2006: THERE IS NO BOX

With **Henry Jenkins** playing the role of the spoon-bending child from *The Matrix*, the C3 Retreat in April got off to a bang. In a mixture of public and private sessions conferees discussed topics including media history, brand loyalty, fan productivity, patterns of multimedia use, online community formation, the global television trade, marketing in video games and the experience economy.

Drawing together consortium members, faculty, and affiliated researchers, the retreat served as a fitting



THERE
IS

NO
BOX

end to the first year of C3, providing an opportunity for the diversity of perspectives the consortium draws upon to be appreciated.

Simultaneously, the retreat began to map out the research trajectory for the second year of the endeavor.

An overview of presentations from the event is available on the C3 blog (http://www.convergenceculture.org/weblog/2006/04/c3_retreats_first_day.html).

MacArthur Funds Second Phase of New Media Literacies

By Margaret Weigel, New Media Literacies research manager

The New Media Literacies (NML) project received additional MacArthur Foundation funding to cover its second phase to be completed over the next three years. Phase II, with an overall budget of over \$1.7 million, officially began July 1 and will expand upon the accomplishments of Phase I.

In its first year, NML developed a conceptual pedagogical framework and began development of curricular materials that facilitate our understanding of the role of new media literacies in the preparation of all youth to be media-savvy, engaged citizens in the contemporary media-rich environment. In Phase II, the project team will continue to work closely with our affiliate assessment sites, Chicago's NKO media charter junior high school and the YWCA Boston's Youth Voice Collaborative after-school program. Also, NML has formed a new alliance with a third site, the New Bedford Whaling Museum, and the hope is to cultivate more such relationships in the coming years as we hire an outreach coordinator.

Exemplar Library

The New Media Exemplar Library is emerging as a centerpiece of NML's curriculum development strategy. A collection of thought-provoking interviews with media makers about their work and the procedural and ethical issues associated with it, the New Media Exemplary Library provides teachers and after-school programs a valuable resource for focusing attention on the practices, processes and ethics of contemporary media making.

Current library entries include Nick Bertozzi, a cartoonist based in NYC; Cory Doctorow, a well-known

blogger (BoingBoing.net), novelist and technology activist; Mathew Lamb, a special-effects artist on films such as *Pearl Harbor*, *Master and Commander*, *Minority Report* and *Black Hawk Down*; and Sean Cole, a radio host and reporter for WBUR-FM, Boston's NPR affiliate.

PROJECT **NML**

<http://www.projectnml.org>

Dick, a theatrical performance led by Rhode Island-based actor Ricardo Pitts-Wiley and performed by a troupe of city teenagers.

Upcoming exemplars will include profiles of TATs Cru, a Bronx-based graffiti collective; the Wikipedia online collaborative encyclopedia; Harmonix, the producers of the popular game *Guitar Hero*; and the production of *Urban Moby-*

Each exemplar consists of the video interview and supporting documents Tools of the Trade, Vocabulary Terms, Additional Resources, Text Transcripts and Producers Comments, as well as curriculum activities appropriate for both classroom and after-school use. All exemplar materials are available free of charge on the NML website and can be viewed at www.projectnml.org/exemplars.

Many thanks to this academic year's NML team educational consultant **Katherine Clinton**, research assistants **Vanessa Bertozzi**, **Amanda Finkelberg**, **Neal Grigsby**, **Orit Kuritsky**, **Ravi Purushotma**, honorary research

assistants **Veronica Bollow** and **Kestrell Verlanger**, and undergraduate researcher **Eylul Dogruel**. Their enthusiasm, creativity, intelligence and hard work helped make the hardest tasks easier, and the easier tasks a joy.



From the NML Exemplar Library: Comic Artist Nick Bertozzi (top), and graffiti artists TATs Cru.

Education Arcade Develops Multi-Player Puzzle Games

By Scot Osterweil, Education Arcade project manager

You are deep in a mysterious labyrinth, searching for a lost dog, trying to rescue it before who knows what will happen to it. You are not entirely alone; from time to time you are visited by an unearthly sprite who takes the form of a young girl. You can't quite figure out whether she is helping you or leading you astray. More ominously, you occasionally feel a chill wind, and the shadow of a Minotaur falls across your path. You flee in terror, not sticking around to confirm what it was that you saw.

Your one comfort is that you are in regular communications with others who are similarly lost. From time to time you glimpse these fellow wanderers down long corridors, but before you can call out to them they disappear through doors that don't obligingly open for you. Nevertheless, you have access to message boards where you exchange encouragement and more importantly, hints about solving the challenges that block your path. You've already wandered too far into the labyrinth to turn back. The only way through is to go forward, no matter the risk.

Labyrinth is the game currently taking shape within the Learning Games to Go project in collaboration with the Education Arcade (EA) and Maryland Public Television (MPT) on a U.S. Department of Education Star Schools grant. *Labyrinth* (its working title) is a multi-player puzzle role-playing game (RPG) promoting math and literacy skills aimed at middle-school students.

The game will be served from MPT's *Thinkport* website. Teams of students will collaborate on solving the puzzles that make up the game's core activity. These puzzles will address pre-algebra, with an emphasis on ratio, proportion, number sense, variables, data, and geometry. The story, delivered in graphic novel format will support literacy goals, as will the challenge of communicating with teammates about problem solving strategies.

Puzzle Testing

EA is responsible for designing *Labyrinth*. After a spring in which the story took shape, we spent the summer designing and testing the first set of puzzles. The challenge in any such design is finding what is game-like in an activity that we normally view as academic. Even when a puzzle emerges, there is still significant effort in adapting it to the technical parameters of the project and to the game story and setting.

Just as challenging is the need to envision a game that will feel authentic to students while meeting teachers' educational objectives.

MPT has produced several podcasts that expand on the design philosophy of the *Labyrinth* team, as it relates to some of our previous work. These can be found at www.thinkport.org/technology/gotgame/doandview/podcast.tp.

Eric Klopfer's Teacher Education Program lab has been a beehive of activity this summer, with a roomful of undergraduate researchers engaged in software development. As part of EA's second Star Schools grant (in collaboration with the Harvard Graduate School of Education and the University of Wisconsin), we are developing desktop-based toolkits which allow middle-school teachers to customize and localize location-based augmented reality games.

EA is also developing a role-playing game designed to help people engage in discussion around science and technology controversies. Participants are faced with a single question (e.g. "should MIT build a BSL-4 biohazard laboratory?"). They move around real locations, meeting virtual characters and gathering virtual documents on a handheld computer, and use the evidence they collect to sway other players toward their view. Large-scale piloting begins in the fall.



Metamedia Launches Social Tagging Initiative

By Kurt Fendt, director of HyperStudio, Metamedia project manager

Imagine you could explore the history of film through a timeline that expands as you dig deeper into its early stages in the year 1895: Not only would you see that the Lumière Brothers held their first public screening on Dec. 28 at the Salon Indien du Grand Café in Paris, but you would also discover that two other film pioneers, also brothers (Max and Emil Skladanowsky), actually showed their first films two months earlier, on Nov. 1 at the Wintergarten Music Hall in Berlin.

A click on the Paris screening would provide you with a list of the 10 films (with thumbnails) that were shown at the Grand Café. Further information would offer you posters and the announcement of the event, links to other works and inventions by the Lumière brothers, relevant reviews, news articles and other secondary literature, and a link to Google Earth showing where the Grand Café was located. In addition, you'd be able to see where the 10 films of the screening were filmed in France (mostly in and around Lyon) and where subsequent screenings took place.

Clicking on the thumbnail of the film *La Sortie de l'Usine Lumière à Lyon* would play the 46-second film in the version restored by the French Film Archives along with relevant metadata.

Imagine further that you could gather all relevant documents into a personal collection that you name "Film – The Early Days," attach your own comments and thoughts along with some relevant Web links and tag it with the keywords that you have used in your research. Immediately, the system notifies you that three other users have already created collections with similar materials that you can access and explore, perhaps adding some of it to your own collection.

That's the vision that the Metamedia group within the HyperStudio has started to implement. Based on principles of the Semantic Web (adding meaningful descriptors that can be processed automatically), social tagging (adding user specific descriptors that can be shared among groups, e.g. Flickr), and so-called mash-ups (a Web 2.0 concept, combining different data resources to create a new meaningful resource), the new shareable media platform, currently dubbed *m3*, extends the notion of searching

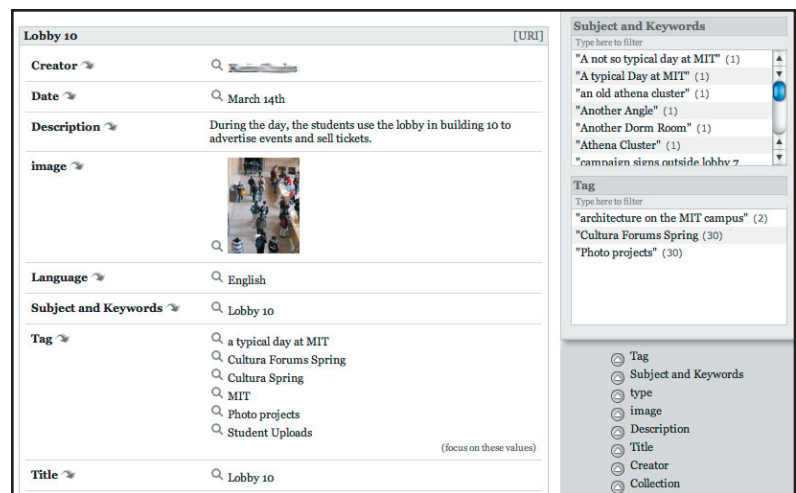
through huge amounts of media materials with the concept of *discovering* related media documents. This initiative is a direct result of our experiences with *m:media*, our current media platform, where users can learn about related materials through the media collections of other users.

For the development of *m3*, we collaborate closely with other groups such as the SIMILE Project at MIT (simile.mit.edu) in order to create a sustainable media repository that integrates standard metadata with social networking principles. With CMS alum **Christopher York** as the main developer on board, we are currently developing a prototype that focuses on the rich history of the Marais quarter in Paris. The Marais project's author, **Gilberte Furstenberg** (FL&L), will be supported by CMS graduate student **Karen Verschooren** to prepare for a fall release of the prototype.

At the same time, the HyperStudio is readying a new version of *m:media* that integrates the public archive of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and later on the digital library at



<http://metamedia.mit.edu/>



The screenshot shows a web interface for a media item titled "Lobby 10". The main content area displays metadata fields: Creator (with a search icon), Date (March 14th), Description (During the day, the students use the lobby in building 10 to advertise events and sell tickets.), Image (with a thumbnail of a group of people), Language (English), Subject and Keywords (Lobby 10), Tag (a list of tags including "a typical day at MIT", "Cultura Forums Spring", "Cultura Spring", "MIT", "Photo projects", and "Student Uploads"), and Title (Lobby 10). To the right, there are two sections: "Subject and Keywords" with a list of terms like "A not so typical day at MIT" and "A typical Day at MIT", and "Tag" with a list of terms like "architecture on the MIT campus" and "Cultura Forums Spring". At the bottom right, there is a list of filters: Tag, Subject and Keywords, type, image, Description, Title, Creator, and Collection.

Metamedia's m3 initiative will use social tagging software such as this to enable users to find and share large, online media collections.

UCLA. This new version of *m:media* will be made open-source by next spring.

Ready to be used for the fall semester are also five new archives on the *m:media* platform: *Revolving Doors* by **James Buzard**; *Contempor@rt* by **Johann Sadock**; *Memory und Commemoration* (extension) by **Dagmar Jaeger**; and *German Short Film* and *German Radio Art* both by **Kurt Fendt**.



Project Good Luck Gets Global with China Trip

C3 media partner GSD&M works with MIT research group

by Beth Coleman





Project Good Luck (projectgoodluck.com) is a new research initiative created and directed by **Beth Coleman** that explores issues of globalism and media use in collaboration within the extended CMS community.

The destination for the initial research trip this summer was the People's Republic of China. The trip had three distinct but intersecting foci: social networks, mobile media and consumer trends in first-tier and second-tier Chinese cities. The research sites for the trip included Shanghai, Beijing, Hong Kong, and Shenzhen. The team led by Coleman was composed of four graduate students (three media studies students from CMS and one Harvard sociologist-in-training) and Convergence Culture Consortium (C3) media partner GSD&M, who assigned a cultural anthropologist and marketing planner to the team.

In China, the team met with a range of cultural, academic, and industry creatives including the Soho Development Group; Motorola; Xiong Chengyu, an advisor on Internet policy; the publisher of *Trends* magazine; and the China Interactive Media Group, as well bloggers and contemporary artists.

'Growing Global Dialogue'

Global experiences continue to gain importance within the MIT curriculum and institute vision of student development. The field of media studies offers rich contributions to an understanding of the growing global dialogue. CMS faculty and students are working to

formulate methods of research and analysis to meet the challenges of international, multidisciplinary exchanges. PGL is one such endeavor.

The two senior graduate researchers on the trip were **Rena Huang** and **Geoffrey Long**. Long designed the PGL blog site and Huang oversaw logistical organization in addition to research. A new student in the CMS graduate program, **Jin Liwen**, met the group in Shanghai and was invaluable in her help connecting with the "netizens" of the various cities. Welcome Liwen! During the course of the trip, **Henry Jenkins**, director of CMS, posted on his blog (henryjenkins.org) an entry regarding the PGL endeavors – the response from an at-large international CMS community was exuberant.

This fall, the next level of PGL will be in development. Interested researchers, media designers, and data analysts are all welcome to get involved. Please contact Coleman (bcoleman@mit.edu) for more information.

Bicycle photo by Beth Coleman; all other photos by Geoffrey Long; PGL sticker by Vinnie Ray.



Science Fiction Marked by Rationalism, Author Says

By Joe Haldeman

The Man I Killed

was in his early 30s, rosaceous,
pocky, the Checker
on a Newark pier. He said

*I'll be respected
by Jersey turds
like you reporters*

*and these Hoboken wankers
still wearing bog shit.
Don't you get it?*

*I said No pictures.
Later, off the wharf
the camera guy*

*used a telephoto lens
as I pointed, for my byline story,
Wildcat Strikers*

*Shut Port Newark.
The next week they found him
floating near a buoy*

*dead in Bayonne harbor
in a mess of bootleg whiskey
and my story in the paper.*

*By David Thorburn, reprinted
from Slate (March 38, 2006).*

*Thorburn is the director of the
MIT Communications Forum,
which is presenting this fall a
series that asks "Will Newspapers
Survive?" See page 6.*

Whatever its shortcomings, actual science fiction (as opposed to fantasy tricked out with space ships and ray guns) is a bastion of rationalism. The universe works by rules, even if those rules are imperfectly understood. Problems are solved not by wishing things were otherwise, but by trying to understand what is actually wrong and taking action to change it.

We live in a world where wishful thinking and magical thinking prevail at the highest levels of leadership. Our own government thinks it can control reality by denying scientific evidence. We're in a war that at least one side justifies by ferocious religious dogma.

More Americans believe in ghosts than in evolution. For that matter, more than half believe the story of Creation in the Bible is literally true and are waiting for the Rapture. Belief in oddball ideas like faith healing, extrasensory perception, communication with the dead, and haunted houses have all been on the increase in the past decade.

These people don't read science fiction, or at least they don't read it well. But they may read books that are shelved in the science fiction section, or go to movies that call themselves sci-fi.

Science fiction's patriarch Damon Knight made a once useful distinction between science fiction and "sci-fi," which he pronounced "skiffy." Skiffy was the purely commercial product that exploited the standard tropes of science fiction, mostly in films but also in books, without depth or originality. Nowadays the term sci-fi is ubiquitous, and in most people's minds is interchangeable with

science fiction, which is a pity, because it remains a useful distinction. Science fiction is not just a literary genre; it's also a way of looking at the universe, which gives rise to the paradox that a work may be both good science fiction and bad writing. Conversely, a work of sci-fi can be slick and elegant without a molecule of depth.

As a long-time writer of science fiction who has occasionally dipped into sci-fi for fun or money, it seems to

me that the distance between the two is like the distance between serious poetry and commercial verse. Most lay people would call both poetry, and indeed there is a superficial similarity in appearance. In both comparisons there are rare examples that can be identified with either genre. But actual science fiction readers and actual poetry readers can tell the difference instantly, instinctively.

Both science fiction and sci-fi are academically interesting, but sci-fi appeals more to students of popular culture and mass communication. Science fiction deserves to be studied alongside other works of fiction written with an element of social criticism or satire.

Note: Science fiction author and four-time Nebula Award winner Joe Haldeman will be featured on Thursday, Nov. 16 at a Communications Forum entitled, "The Craft of Science Fiction." For more information, see web.mit.edu/comm-forum.



Grad Students Teach Radio Storytelling

By Vanessa Bertozzi '06 and Orit Kuritsky '06

In MIT's Terrascope class, students learn by doing. In Spring 2006, we learned by teaching.

We were teaching assistants for Ari Epstein's Terrascope Radio, a class for freshman in the Terrascope interdisciplinary earth sciences learning group. In fact, Terrascope Radio was developed collaboratively by the Terrascope Program and CMS.

This year's Terrascope topic was to study tsunami preparedness and recovery in the circum-Pacific region. In the spring, students focused on one event in particular: the largest earthquake and tsunami on record—a 9.5 on the Richter scale in 1960, which was followed immediately by a tsunami that devastated the coast of Chile.

Ultimately, our students' mission would be to create their own 20-minute radio documentary. They came to us with no prior experience in radio and little familiarity with its conventions or potential.

Where to start the production of a full-fledged radio documentary?

This scenario was bit daunting, knowing that at the end of the semester, the students' program would air on WMBR and have the chance to be licensed to public radio affiliates through Public Radio Exchange (PRX.org). Fortunately, Epstein, along with **Rekha Murthy** and **Joellen Easton** (teaching assistants who graduated from CMS in 2005), had crafted a curriculum that introduced the students to the building blocks of radio storytelling, while teaching them to use professional audio recording equipment, interviewing techniques, and how to use audio editing software.

Terrascope Radio 'Sinks In'

When you are standing on top of an active volcano and see one of your students pull out her microphone for an impromptu interview with a classmate, the Terrascope experience really sinks in. It's a remarkable opportunity for a diverse group of students to form a community with each other and upperclassmen alumni of the program who return



A Terrascope student with tsunami survivors. Photo by Vanessa Bertozzi.

in an undergraduate teaching fellow (UTF) capacity.

Kids drop by the Terrascope room to hang out and chat with each other, to help each other with homework and maybe snooze on a couch for a few minutes. This camaraderie was impressive.

But even more impressive was seeing the growth of our students' awareness of the medium itself. There was a magical moment when staying up late to facilitate final editing, we took a step back and observed as our students put the words and ideas and technical know-how into practice. By the end of the semester, these freshmen were using analytical tools to craft their own piece. A quite good piece, at that. You can hear it at PRX.org at <http://prx.org/group/terrascoperadio/pieces> or at www.mit.edu/~awe/StoriesOfSurvival.mp3. A 10-minute excerpt of the program is at www.mit.edu/~awe/SurvivingATsunami.mp3.

At the end of the semester, we had a feedback session with the students. An excerpt from one of the students explains the impact of Terrascope Radio best: "I really am surprised by how much I learned in the duration of this past semester. From never really listening to radio for stories before and thinking that almost all radio pieces sound just about the same, I have grown to appreciate this whole media and the work that must be put into it to produce a good radio piece."

CMS Welcomes Class of 2008



Michael Danziger combines a BA in physics from Boston University with extensive work at the Massachusetts College of Art in printmaking, but his primary interest is in the application of interactive computer graphics to problems in knowledge and information transfer. Since graduation, he has been working as a software developer at the MIT Center for Educational Computing Initiatives, developing classroom-ready educational physics visualizations and simulations as part of Physics professor John Belcher's TEAL (Technology Enhanced Active Learning) Project. Expanding on that work, he has more recently joined forces with a group under biology professor Graham Walker to develop an educationally friendly molecular visualization tool. At CMS, Danziger hopes to continue his study of fields such as information visualization, visual perception, and digital media, in an attempt to better understand how their principles can be exploited and synthesized to create more effective and practical visualizations for the purposes of education, entertainment, and aesthetics.

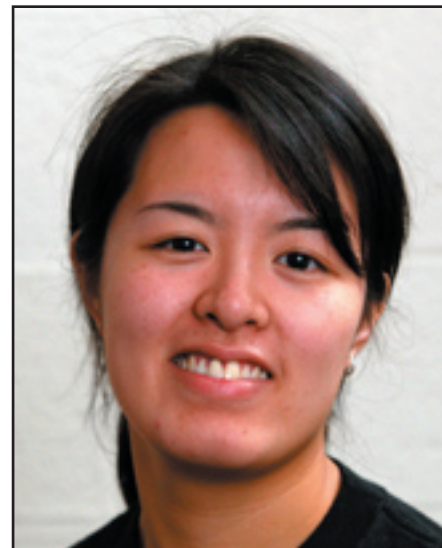


Jin Liwen hails from China, where she received her undergraduate degree in media and communications from Nanjing University followed up by studies in American politics and history and international relations at the Johns Hopkins University-Nanjing University Center for Chinese and American Studies. She interned in the news commentary division at China's largest media organization, China Central Television (CCTV), and worked as a journalist at News Probe, an investigative documentary series that addressed the problems of marginal populations such as homosexuals and AIDS patients. This experience encouraged Liwen to turn her academic work towards a critical investigation of the relationship between various media forms (traditional media, blogs and online bulletin board systems) and the development of a democratic culture and public sphere. At CMS, she is eager to continue her research into the role of media in facilitating political democratization and international cultural understanding.



Andres Alberto Lombana graduated in 2003 with a double BA in political science and literature from Colombia's *Universidad de los Andes*. From 2001 to 2005, Andres worked for the *Fundacion Universitaria Iberoamericana* (FUNIBER), a Spanish electronic learning company active in Latin America. There, he administered and edited e-learning objects that were both adaptive and migratory, and worked to develop learning communities. He was awarded a fellowship to spend 8 months at FUNIBER's Barcelona headquarters where he worked on digital layout and publishing processes. In 2001, he co-founded *Elektrodomestika*, a cross-media laboratory which explores and experiments with the use of new technologies in art creation. His latest project, *Cotidianity*, is a computer operetta that explores digital storytelling. His digital video *The Duel* (stop motion animation) was selected as part of the first Latin American and Caribbean Video Art Competition, and shown in the International Development Bank's art gallery in Washington and the Ethnologischen Museum of Berlin. Interactive media production, creative educational strategies, and the discourse of globalization combine to form the core of what Lombana would like to pursue at CMS.

Debora Lui is a 2003 alumna of MIT with a double major in architecture and management science, and a minor in theater. Lui has long been fascinated by the relationship between space and performance. This interest has taken the form of an MIT Eloranta Undergraduate Research Fellowship, where she explored the relationship from a historical perspective, an internship at Berkeley Repertory Theatre, where she immersed herself in the logistics of theatrical production, and a UROP with the Interactive Cinema Group at the Media Lab. Currently, she is working with Tom Ip & Partners Architects in Hong Kong assisting in the design of entertainment and sports centers. At CMS, Lui is interested in exploring the history of spectatorship and the sensory interfaces that audiences use to engage with media, particularly in how they can relate to our connection to architecture and our physical environment. She also has an interest in film and television studies.



Stephen J. Schultze holds a 2002 BA in computer science and philosophy from Calvin College (Grand Rapids, MI). Since graduation, Schultze has served as a project director at the Public Radio Exchange in Cambridge: “Through PRX, I’ve been closely involved with station consultations on issues of cross-media branding in podcasting and web strategy. I launched a project that provides stations with a customized, branded podcast interface for their listeners. We advise stations that their brand identity and relationships with listeners have become more important than ever in a multi-channel world.” He has also collaborated on projects through the MIT Media Lab where he helped Carla Gomez-Monroy to build an experimental radio production system for Mexican diasporic communities in New York City and has served as a technical advisor and teaching assistant for Beth Coleman’s Introduction to Media Studies class. He has a strong interest in both contemporary and historical efforts to use radio as a documentary and storytelling medium, in social software and participatory culture, and the future of public broadcasting.



Evan Wendel graduated with a BS in physics from Hobart College in 2004, and calls media studies his driving passion. He is attracted to CMS because of its attention to the critical study of games (where he has an interest in MMORPGs) and the opportunity to balance theory and practice. Since graduating, Evan has spent time traveling throughout the US, particularly along the West Coast, spending his free time as a practicing digital artist. Just prior to joining CMS he worked as a software technician at Xerox debugging code for developmental software. Evan’s specific interests include thinking through virtual communities and issues of self-regulation, as well as the culture of democracy, especially as they relate to game architecture. He also has a strong interest in the concept of an informed citizenry, its purpose(s) in a democratic society, and the impact new media technologies employed by news media are having in these areas. While at CMS he hopes to focus on the following question: can MMORPGs or similar games with community-based interactions be designed such that players would be simultaneously entertained, educated, and engaged in civic debate and interaction? He is eager to bring his mix of technical geekdom, artistic achievement, and critical thinking to the table.





Huma Yusuf graduated from Harvard in 2002 with a degree in English and American Literature, and returned to Pakistan to work as a journalist. She specializes in writing about social trends as represented in media and media and society issues, in addition to addressing subjects such as low-income housing, honor killings, gang wars and the state's ineffective prosecution of rape cases. Her writing garnered the UNESCO/Pakistan Press Foundation 'Gender in Journalism 2005 Award and the European Commission's 2006 Natali Lorenzo Prize for Human Rights Journalism. Yusuf is interested in investigating the interface among media, local politics and global trends - an intersection that she will explore through sites such as community radio, trends in media consumption, and online environments. With the support of the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan, she is currently launching a first-of-its-kind webzine, the goal of which is to provide an alternate forum where journalists, academics, and media students can examine and critique the Pakistani media industry at large.

New People Join CMS Ranks

Literature Hire Explores Comparative Media, CMS Gets New Staff

Sarah Brouillette joins MIT's faculty as an assistant professor in Literature, specializing in contemporary postcolonial, British, and Irish writing. Her interests in the relationships between new literatures and the forces of political and economic globalization make her a valuable asset in CMS.

"As a humanities researcher drawn to the social sciences, I am excited by the prospect of developing a critical media history with students and scholars from many disciplines," Brouillette explains, "and CMS's commitment to making its comparative media research available as real-world public knowledge is just as appealing."

Rik Eberhardt comes on board as the CMS technologist. Eberhardt will split his time between CMS and the New Media Literacies (NML) project, maintaining local area networks, websites, computers, equipment, databases, and serving as resident expert on all things technical.



Sarah Brouillette



Rik Eberhardt

Eberhardt is a 2002 graduate of William & Mary where he designed his own major in literary and cultural studies with a minor in computer science.

Ximena Forero-Irizarry is CMS' new financial assistant. Irizarry has years of experience as a financial administrator at MIT in Information Services and Technology (IS&T) and the Center for Materials Science and Engineering. When not crunching numbers, she watches her two sons and enjoys comic books, particularly *Superman*.

Anna van Someren joins New Media Literacies as a video producer. She comes to CMS from our colleagues at the Youth Voice Collaborative at the Boston YWCA, where she developed new media curriculum, coordinated a community expansion project, designed and taught multimedia production workshops, and organized video screenings and other events.

Someren played a similar role at the Ark After School Program in Troy, NY, and has taught courses on digital editing and video storytelling at the college level. She will assist research assistants in all aspects of video production and editing and will organize the project's video materials.

Faculty

Beth Coleman (CMS, Writing) led a summer research trip to China on the subject of social networks and mobile media. The trip is the first exploratory step in a three-year project on globalization, communication, and new media uses. Back at home, her current projects include a machinima short film that she is working on with three undergraduate researchers. Her recent publications include, "Mr. Softee Takes Command; Morphological Soft Machines," *Leonardo Journal* and "Waken" artist statement, *Leonardo Journal of Music*, and the upcoming "Shut Up and Dance" in the *Machinima Reader*. She chaired the "Code as Media" panel at SCMS and SLSA, and Coleman was honored with the American Association of University Women Educational Foundation's 2006 Recognition Award for Emerging Scholars.

Ian Condry (Foreign Languages and Literatures, or FLL) was awarded a National Science Foundation grant in cultural anthropology for research on his book project *Global Anime: The Making of Japan's Transnational Popular Culture*. He spent the summer in Tokyo conducting fieldwork in anime studios and interviewing anime creators. During the '06-'07 academic year, Condry, will be on-leave as a research fellow at Harvard University's Program on U.S.-Japan Relations.

Thomas F. DeFrantz (Music and Theater Arts, or MTA) had his musical *The Man in My Head* featured in the

New York Musical Theater Festival. His play *Queer Theory! An Academic Travesty* will enjoy its world premiere at the Boston Center for the Arts in October, produced by SLIPPAGE and the Theater Offensive of Boston, and play at MIT in the Kresge Little Theater Nov. 30, Dec. 1 and 2. DeFrantz taught dance studies at the American Dance Festival at Duke University over the summer, and convened an international group of scholars in a working group on corporeality in Helsinki, Finland.

Kurt Fendt (CMS, FLL) presented some of his latest research at the International Conference on Digital Media and On-Line Education at Kainan University, Taipei, Taiwan. As part of a new collaboration between the HyperStudio and the Center for Digital Humanities at UCLA, Fendt was invited to Los Angeles to discuss some of the latest work on integrating Open Knowledge Initiative frameworks into the Metamedia project. For the second consecutive year, he was invited to act as an External Moderating Examiner for a course in Humanities Computing at Cambridge University. In July, Fendt attended the Munich Film Festival to check out some new German short films for his fall course in German Studies and next year's Short Film Festival. CLE International, Paris published the CD-ROM version of *A la Rencontre de Philippe* which Fendt co-authored with **Gilberte Furstenberg**.

Gilberte Furstenberg (FLL) had an article co-authored with Kathryn English published in the July issue of *Le Français dans le Monde, Recherches et*

applications (CLE International, Paris), devoted to on-line exchanges in learning and training. She also had a CD-ROM published by CLE International in Paris entitled *A la Rencontre de Philippe*. Originally published by Yale University Press in videodisc format, the new format design was developed in co-authorship with **Kurt Fendt**.

Henry Jenkins (CMS) spent the summer at his cabin in the north Georgia mountains as his book *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* was released by New York University Press. In anticipation of the book's publication, Jenkins launched a blog at henryjenkins.org where he writes each day about contemporary media and popular culture. Topics so far have included comic books after 9/11, the Deleting Online Predators Act and its impact on education, *Serenity*, *Snakes on a Plane*, *Robot Chicken*, and online gaming in China. The blog has been a place to showcase the work of CMS students, alums, faculty, and research affiliates as well as a place for commentary and discussion around the book. He has also done guest blogging at a range of other sites, including PBS's *Media Shift* and the Media Center's *Morph*.

Anthony Lioi (Writing) has been starting his new project on popular media and environmental politics. He will present part of it at the Modern Language Association Annual Convention this December in Philadelphia. The talk will be called "Echoes of the Ainur: Cosmological Environmentalism in The Lord of the Rings." CMS folks at the

Faculty, Students Sought for Cultural Capital Study Group

Ian Condry and **Edward Turk** are coordinating a new Foreign Languages and Literatures-sponsored study group on International Cultural Capital, for a small number of MIT faculty and graduate students.

Driving the project is a curiosity about the new concepts of "cultural economy" (the changing relationships between cultural production and economic production) and "creative industries" and their ramifications for the humanities disciplines.

"The hope is to develop multidisciplinary tools of analysis for the critical paradigm of cultural economy," Turk said, "with a special emphasis on Asia and Europe."

It's expected that this study group will meet at least twice each term of the academic year 2006-2007, and will continue to meet in subsequent years. Interested parties are encouraged to contact Condry (condry@mit.edu) or Turk (ebturk@mit.edu) for further information.

conference are welcome to attend if they can bear a panel at 8:30 am!

Jeff Ravel (History) completed editing volume 36 of *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, an annual publication of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies. He also continued work on his book *The Would-Be Commoner*, a study of a late seventeenth-century French criminal case involving murder, bigamy, and a stage play. He will finish the project this coming fall, when he is on leave from teaching.

Alice Robison (CMS) successfully defended her University of Wisconsin-Madison Ph.D. dissertation, "Inventing Fun: Videogame Design as a Writing Process" and moved to the Cambridgeport section of Cambridge as she begins work as a post-doctoral fellow in CMS. In the midst of moving, Robison sat on a panel with **Kurt Squire** and Constance Steinkuehler at the Sandbox Symposium on Videogames (part of SIGGRAPH) where she talked about the ways that game designers create games that inspire players' complex literacy activities. This term, she will teach Videogame Theory and Analysis.

Charity Scribner (FLL) is on research leave this term. She will spend the autumn at Balliol College, Oxford University, conducting research on German left-wing militancy and the cultural response to it.

Irving Singer (Philosophy) completed two books this summer: *Ingmar Bergman, Cinematic Philosopher: Reflections on his Creativity* and *Cinematic Mythmaking: Philosophy in Film*, both accepted for publication by The MIT Press. This fall, he'll be teaching his course *Feeling and Imagination in Art, Science* in collaboration with CMS post doc **Hugo Liu**. Irving has now resumed work on his unfinished book on the nature of creativity.

David Thorburn (Literature, CMS) has been awarded a senior Fulbright Fellowship to teach in The Netherlands next spring. He will teach a version of his

CMS TV course to graduate students at the Institute for Media at the University of Utrecht, and will lecture on American poetry and on media history at the University of Amsterdam.

Edward Baron Turk (FLL) recently returned from France, where he was researching aspects of contemporary French theater during a sabbatical leave. His overview will appear in the November issue of *The French Review*, and this fall he is launching a new undergraduate class on the subject, to be conducted entirely in French. In connection with the course, and open to all of the MIT media and arts community, Turk has invited Pascal Rambert and members of his stage company, Side One Posthume Theatre, to perform at MIT in November.

William Uricchio (CMS) is putting the finishing touches on a book that addresses media and European identity, and meanwhile continues his research on life on the other side of the Atlantic. In the early fall, he'll be speaking in Nottingham on a new European Science Foundation initiative on media and terror; in Copenhagen to the Association of Danish Media Researchers; and he will continue his work with the Royal Dutch Academy of Sciences on conceptualization of a 21st-century model for media studies.

Christine Walley (Anthropology) is working on a video documentary entitled *Exit Zero* with Christopher Boebel. The video uses personal family history to explore the changes wrought in Chicago's Calumet region as former steel mills came to be replaced by a post-industrial landscape of toxic waste sites and floating gambling casinos. Walley is also finishing a book that provides an ethnographic portrait of transnational feminism by exploring the relationship between two women's organizations, one in Africa and one in Europe.

Graduate Students

Ivan Askwith ('07) spent the summer pursuing multiple projects. In addition to finishing an extensive white paper on the emerging field of Alternate

Reality Games for the Convergence Culture Consortium, Askwith traveled to Los Angeles to meet with the producers of *Lost*, San Diego to work on site with the production team of *Veronica Mars* (and attend the annual ComicCon), and New York to assist Interpublic Media in a first-round analysis of this fall's new television programming schedule. After a hectic three months, he looks forward to a relaxing, slow-paced academic year.

Alec Austin ('07) spent the summer as a game-design intern at Treyarch, one of Activision's development studios. In addition to working at Treyarch, he wrote a white paper on intellectual property for the Convergence Culture Consortium, and had a D&D adventure published in *Dungeon Magazine*. Austin looks forward to working on his thesis (which concerns narrative and non-narrative expectations in entertainment media), as well as doing research for C3 in the coming year.

Tracy Daniels ('07) continues her thesis research and looks forward to working with the New Media Literacies group in the fall.

Kristina Drzaic ('07) was occupied with building a whole video game story world. She worked, along with **Scot Osterweil** and **Dan Roy**, as a videogame designer on the Education Arcade's Learning Games 2 Go project. She also worked as a camera person on **Generoso Fierro's** in-production documentary, visited Siggraph, explored the Atlantic coastline and continued her thesis research on video game secrets.

Amanda Finkelberg ('07) spent most of this summer in Los Angeles, freelancing as a visual effects compositor on several music videos, commercials and low-budget features. She had the pleasure of working with several new clients, including MVPA's Director of the Year, Mark Webb, on a rig-intensive video for the band Evanescence. She continued researching and reading for her upcoming thesis and after many years of procrastination, learned to surf more than the Internet in the erratic break at Venice Beach.

Sam Ford ('07) is preparing to teach a class on professional wrestling in the spring semester for CMS, advised by **Anthony Lioi**. He is working on essays about how convergence is affecting small-town journalism, about World Wrestling Entertainment as a transmedia corporation, and about the character Tom Hughes on "As the World Turns." His thesis work is on how American daytime soap operas are adopting to the current convergence culture, based on his continued work with the Convergence Culture Consortium.

Neal Grigsby ('07) spent his summer editing video footage of New York City graffiti collective Tats Cru from their recent MIT visit. The finished segments will be used in educational curricula as part of the New Media Literacies project. In August, he and recent CMS graduate **Vanessa Bertozzi** shot interviews with Wikipedia contributors and volunteers in attendance at the Wikimania conference, held this year at Harvard Law School. Rounding out a video-intensive summer, Grigsby began producing a DVD video reader for **Henry Jenkins'** fall class on contemporary cinema, for which he'll be the teaching assistant.

Rena Huang ('07) spent a busy summer in China. For one third of it, she was interviewing people, attending seminars and watching cartoons for both CMS' Metamedia research project and her own thesis project on Chinese animation. For another third of it, she was happily involved with the Project Good Luck research trip and hosting her CMS visitors. And, of course, she reserved the rest of the summer for her families and friends, especially her dear nephew, who just turned one.

Orit Kuritsky ('06) spent the summer in Somerville, Paris and Jerusalem. Besides working on her thesis

she wrote a piece on television for *The Inner History of Devices: Technology and Self*, a forthcoming MIT Press book edited by Sherry Turkle.

Geoffrey Long ('07) spent June doing research and design for **Beth Coleman's** Project Good Luck, which culminated in a two-week trip to Beijing and Shanghai in July. He returned to Boston to speak on transmedia storytelling at SIGGRAPH 2006, then drove to Chicago to attend a friend's new play. August found him in Ohio, working on a white paper on mobile media for C3, websites for CMS, C3, **Henry Jenkins** and **William Uricchio**, a redesign for *In Medias Res*, several freelance projects and his novel. September finds him looking for a vacation.



Amanda Finkelberg spent part of her summer working on a video for Evanescence and lead singer Amy Lee (pictured).

Peter Rauch ('07) recently moved, and when not performing brutish physical labor he spent time on thesis research. He will be working with New Media Literacies in the coming term.

Karen Verschooren ('07) caught up with family and friends and spent June at Argos, a center for new media arts in Brussels, where she worked on an exhibition proposal for spring 2007. A workshop on Media Lab alum Casey Reas' and Ben Fry's processing software in Brussels not only opened the world of Java programming, but also revitalized her French. In the fall, Verschooren plans to continue her thesis work for which interviews in London and Belgium were encouraging and heart-warming.

Alumni

Jim Bizzocchi ('01) is an assistant professor at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, British Columbia where his research interests include the aesthetics of digital video, issues in interactive narrative, and the design of educational games and simulations. He is a founding member of the Canadian Games Studies Association, and will present at its inaugural conference this September. His *Ambient Video* series of video art has been exhibited in London, Melbourne, Los Angeles, Ann Arbor, and Vancouver. (see back cover).

Francisco DeLaTorre snagged a job in New Zealand at Weta Digital, working on such projects as *Eragon* and *Bridge to Terabithia*. If Internet rumors are true, he will live the ultimate fanboy dream of working on a film version of *Halo*. Which, considering how much time he has lost to that video game, might just be the peak of his career. It's all downhill from here.

Nadya Direkova ('03) is a designer at Backbone Entertainment, where she is focused on the production of a new PSP title: *Brooktown High: Senior Year*, slated for a spring '07 release. This dating game simulation recreates the joys and trials of high school life and earned high praise at this year's Electronic Entertainment Exhibition (E3) where *Developers Magazine* called it one of the top 10 games at the conference.

Michael Epstein ('04) is the CEO of Untravel Media, a company founded by MIT alum from CMS, Computer Science and Media Arts and Sciences. Based in Cambridge, the company develops mobile media documentaries for cell phones and iPods. The mobile media project he developed in Venice last year is being distributed at this year's Biennale of Architecture in partnership with the

Automobile Club d'Italia. Epstein is currently working on productions in Boston and New York.

Daniel Huecker ('02) spent a year in Guatemala with a children's media project and as a visiting professor at Universidad Raphael Landivar, teaching intro to media, photography, and helping design a masters program in communications. Returning to the U.S., he worked for the City of Santa Barbara producing radio, TV and print advertising campaigns to prevent water pollution. Huecker is now married, getting his teaching certification and taking gigabytes of pictures of his new baby boy.

Brian Jacobson ('05) completed his first year of Ph.D. coursework in the Critical Studies Program at the University of Southern California School of Cinema-TV. During the spring semester, Jacobson presented papers at USC (on Michael Snow and Gilles Deleuze) and at the University of California-Riverside (on language and rhetoric in media coverage of Hurricane Katrina). His research continues to focus on comparative media, with an emphasis on critical theory, cinema and architecture, and spectatorship.

Sarah Kamal ('05) completed her first year of doctoral studies in Media and Communications at the London School of Economics. She also was a consultant for the Department for International Development and McGill University, was a guest speaker at a seminar on Afghanistan at the University of Geneva, and contributed a chapter on Afghan women and media development strategies to the book *Domestic Violence in Muslim Families*, due to be released this fall. She was under the supervision of the late Roger Silverstone who passed away in July, and is considering taking a year's leave of absence before returning to full-time studies.

Zhan Li ('03) continues to work as a Wall St. analyst covering the global media and entertainment sectors. He is also providing advice and support for Sangita Shresthova's latest Nepal documentary dance film project, as well as developing an online international grassroots alumni initiative for the University of Cambridge.

Susannah Mandel ('03) spent the 2005-2006 school year teaching English in Lille, France for the second year



CMSers Parmesh Shahani, Vanessa Bertozzi (center) and Karen Schrier at graduation.

running. In the late fall of 2006, she plans to depart for Seoul, South Korea to teach at a private institution after passing back through the U.S. to visit friends and family.

Rekha Murthy ('05) spent the past year freelancing as a producer for radio programs including NPR's *Day to Day*, NPR's *On Point*, and WGBH/BBC/PRI's *The World*. In March, she began work as an information architect with a Boston-based IT consulting company. Murthy is also collaborating on a book with Kelly Goto of Gotomedia about incorporating deep user research into the design and innovation processes for mobile technologies.

Aswin Punathambekar ('03) is completing his doctoral dissertation. Over the next few months, he also plans to finish editing an anthology on Bollywood cinema and culture and a documentary

on Bollywood and Indian-American families. Punathambekar is a research associate with the Convergence Culture Consortium at CMS and contributes articles on media culture in South Asia. On a personal note, Punathambekar is now happily married and lives with his wife in Buffalo, NY.

Sangita Shresthova ('03) divided her summer between the editing room (working on her documentary on Nepali dances supported by **Zhan Li**), the dance studio (preparing for her upcoming tour with the Post Natyam dance collective), and her mobile phone (negotiating the details of the upcoming fourth year of the Prague Bollywood Festival). She also continues her journey towards a Ph.D. at the Department of World Arts and Cultures at UCLA.

David Spitz ('01) is a Fellow with the WPP Group, the UK-based advertising and marketing conglomerate.

He recently completed his first rotation with Ogilvy & Mather New York, and will spend 2007 based in London with another WPP company.

Christa Starr ('01) has finally achieved her lifelong goal of becoming a vampire. She also continues to work in computer animation as a lead lighter for Dreamworks Animation in Glendale, California. And she's not kidding about the vampire thing - watch *Blade: the Series*.

Qi Wang ('02) is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Film and TV, UCLA. Her dissertation is on contemporary independent Chinese cinema. She is the assistant curator for the REEL CHINA Documentary Biennial, New York. She has published widely in English, Chinese, and French on Chinese cinema, documentary and Japanese animation.

Alumni Screens the Great Outdoors

(continued from back cover)

This interest is partly based in my previous experience as a documentary filmmaker and videographer, but its real inception occurred during my graduate work at CMS. I started to think about the implications of the new video display technologies for video producers. As someone who had worked as a cinematographer in both film and video, I was acutely aware of the differences between the two media. Video did share much of the aesthetics of film, but it simply couldn't compete in terms of visual impact.

The small fuzzy box in the corner of the living room was no match for the big bright screen of the theatre.

As I started to think about the new video displays, I realized that televisual aesthetics were in the early stages of a significant evolutionary jump. The television picture was leaving its squat box and migrating to elegant frames hung on the wall.

The sizes of domestic LCD and Plasma screens were increasing, and the prices for these units were steadily dropping.

Furthermore, just as picture size was getting steadily larger, picture quality was going to increase even more dramatically. HD standards were beginning their inexorable process through the electronics marketplace. Initially confined to the early adopter end of the consumer spectrum, they were poised to begin their introduction into the mainstream.

Television's Future

My interest in this direction is not in the technology per se, or in the economics of this process. I am fascinated by the effect of these large, high-resolution visual environments on the visual aesthetics of the new television. In my academic writing, I predict that the new video aesthetics will re-converge with the cinematic aesthetics from which they diverged decades ago. Television's enforced reliance on the close-up will disappear, and the cinematic wide shot will become a viable option for visual storytelling.

The lessons of Welles, Ford, and Eisenstein will be re-applied in a new format. As the wide-shot is revitalized, television's cutting pace will have the option of slowing down. Visual storytelling can rely on the rich *mise-en-scene* of the wide shot, rather than an edited series of medium and close

shots. At the same time, the larger and finer-grained video screens will support a more pictorial aesthetic, with a renewed emphasis on composition, texture, and lighting.

The answers to my questions at the beginning of this article are "yes," "yes," and "yes." Domestic video displays do approach Imax in the reach of their effective visual field, and the home theatre will continue to thrive (including home audio environments that match any theatrical venue). We will also watch television in all its variations: news, sports, game shows, sitcoms, dramas, and reality TV. At the same time, the new screens will be something different. Playing HD-quality video games on larger and larger home displays will become even more engaging and performative.



New video aesthetics will reconverge with the cinematic aesthetics from which they diverged decades ago.

— Jim Bizzocchi '01

Ambient video artists can draw inspiration from decades of artists such as Michael Snow, Andy Warhol, Andrei Tarkovsky, and Bill Viola who have explored the slow form of the moving image.

I have produced two works in my ambient video series: *Rockface* and *Streaming Video*. Both these works were shot in the Canadian Rockies, and they explore the use of landscape, composition, temporal manipulation, and layered visual transitions. The series has had a successful exhibition record, and I look forward to continuing my creative work. I have shot the third piece, *Winterscape*, and will finish the editing and post-production this fall.

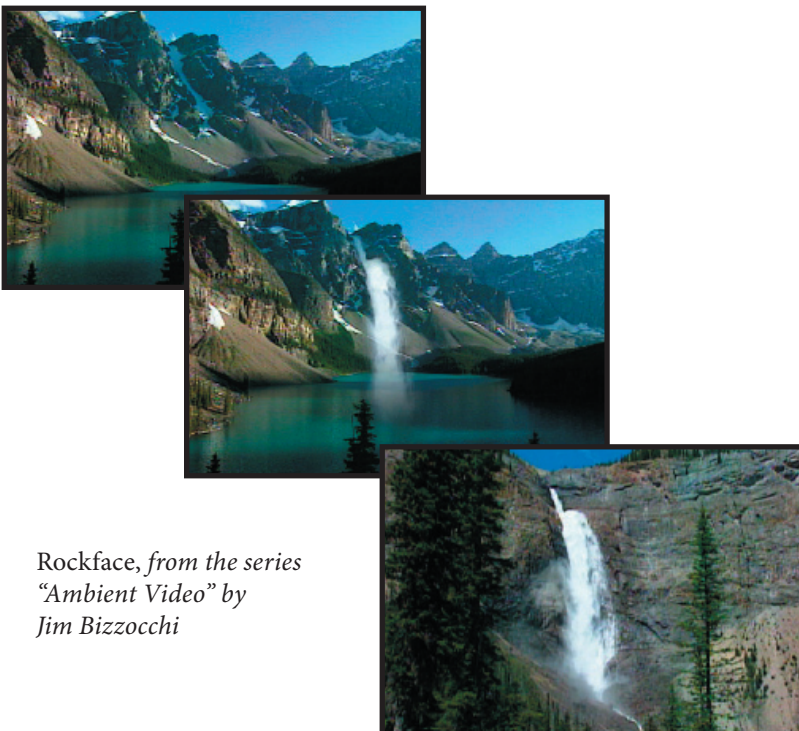
My final thought is something I have come to understand more deeply the longer I have been gone from MIT. It doesn't matter whether I am shooting in the Rockies, writing in Vancouver, or attending academic conferences in distant venues. I always feel that as far as I have traveled from the Charles River, I have never really left, and never will. I've based my career and my personal growth on the intellectual foundation I built during my experience in Comparative Media Studies.

Ambient Video

Finally, I see the growth of a new form of televisual experience which I call "ambient video." This form of moving image plays on our living room walls like a video painting. The video Yule log has been around for decades, along with its companion, the video aquarium. However this form is moving out of the kitsch realm and becoming a recognized art form. It received its own category at SIGGRAPH this year: "4-D Wall-Hung Art (works that reside in a frame or on the wall but move)."



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*Rockface, from the series
“Ambient Video” by
Jim Bizzocchi*

Alumni Screens the Great Outdoors

By Jim Bizzocchi '01

“If you are standing six feet away from a five-foot wide high-resolution video screen, is that television, or is that IMAX? Or is it something else?”

These are questions I am trying to answer. As an assistant professor in the School of Interactive Arts at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, I have developed an active research agenda that includes interests in interactive narrative and the design of educational games and simulations. However, my core research is in the future of the televisual experience.

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