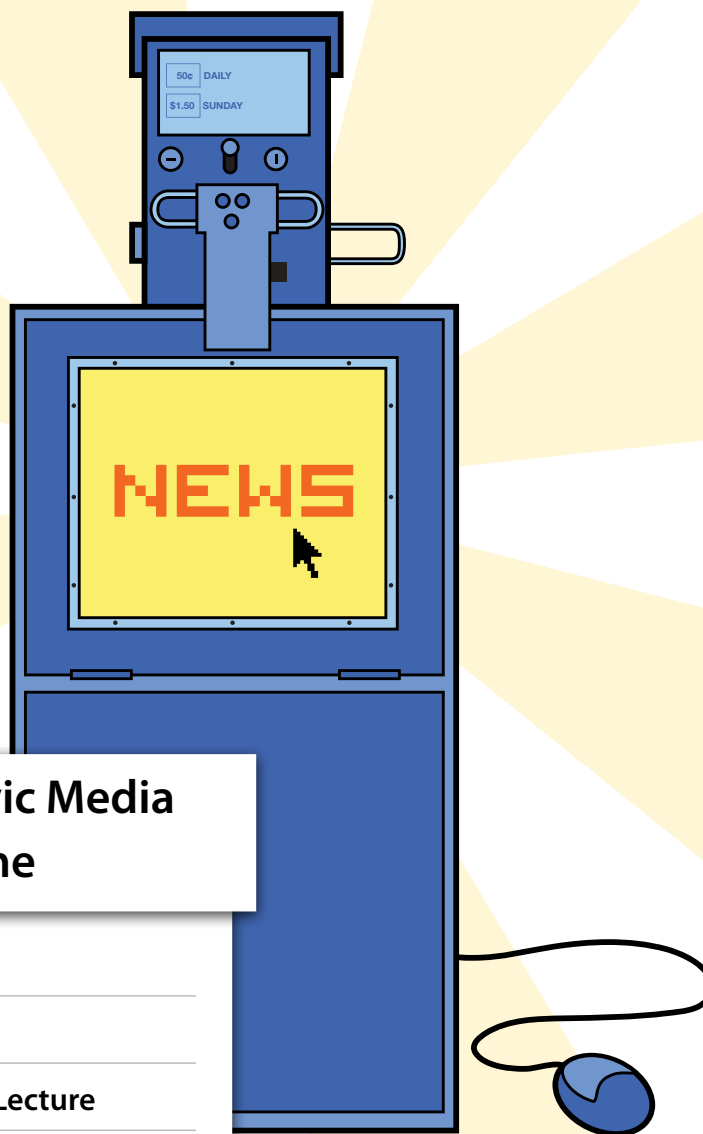


Comparative **MEDIA** Studies

# *In Medias Res*

CMS.MIT.EDU • SPRING 2008



## Inventing the Future of Civic Media with C4FCM and Ellen Hume

Live Action Anime? Only at MIT!

Spring Course Profiles: Media@MIT

Neil Gaiman to Present Julius Schwartz Lecture

Introducing the MIT Games Curriculum

HyperStudio Examines US-Iran *Missed Opportunities*

Futures of Entertainment 2 Introduces Backchan.nl

CMS Undergraduate Major Nears Permanent Status



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Technology



I FROM THE DIRECTORS

**CMS Undergraduate Major Nearly Ready for Liftoff**

*Henry Jenkins and William Uricchio*

2 FEATURE STORIES

**Center for Future Civic Media Welcomes Ellen Hume**

*Huma Yusuf*

3 FEATURE STORIES

**The New Games Curriculum at MIT**

*Clara Fernández-Vara*

4 FEATURE STORIES

**Live Action Anime? Only at MIT!**

*Henry Jenkins*

7 FEATURE STORIES

**Spring Course Profile: Media@MIT**

*William Uricchio*

8 FEATURE STORIES

**HyperStudio Examines Missed Opportunities Between US and Iran**

*Huma Yusuf*

9 FEATURE STORIES

**Futures of Entertainment 2 Conference Introduces Backchan.nl**

*Huma Yusuf*

IO EVENTS

**Spring 2008 Colloquium Calendar**

I3 EVENTS

**CMS Class of 2008 Thesis Presentation Schedule**

*Leila Kinney*

I4 EVENTS

**CMS Hosts *House, M.D.*'s Katie Jacobs and Novelist Wu Ming 1**

*Geoffrey Long*

I4 EVENTS

**Tenth Annual CMS Media Spectacle Returns April 28**

*Generoso Fierro*

I5 EVENTS

**Neil Gaiman to Present Julius Schwartz Lecture May 23rd**

*Geoffrey Long*

I5 EVENTS

**Digital Writing Group Announces Spring Lineup**

I6 PROJECT UPDATES

**C3: What Happens on YouTube, Anyway?**

*Joshua Green & Sam Ford*

I7 PROJECT UPDATES

**The Education Arcade: Envisioning the Future of Educational Games**

*Scot Osterweil*

I8 PROJECT UPDATES

**GAMBIT Welcomes Doris C. Rusch and Jesper Juul**

*Geoffrey Long & Clara Fernández-Vara*

I9 PROJECT UPDATES

**HyperStudio Develops Resources for Exploring History and Historiography**

*Whitney Trettien*

20 PROJECT UPDATES

**Project NML: All Together Now**

*Anna van Someren & Kelly Leahy*

2I PROJECT UPDATES

**Center for Future Civic Media Research Taking Form**

*Geeta Dayal*

2I POEM

**Poem**

*Nick Montfort*

22 PEOPLE, PLACES, THINGS

**Faculty & Alumni Updates**

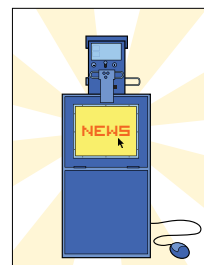
29 CMS IN THE NEWS

**CMS Makes Headlines Around the Globe**

30 PEOPLE, PLACES, THINGS

**Gupta Deep Dives into Real-World CMS**

*Huma Yusuf*



ON OUR COVER

**Ellen Hume and C4FCM Inventing the Future of Civic Media: p2**

*Illustration by Geoffrey Long*

TOP

**Live Action Anime: *Madness at Mokuba*: p4**

*Photograph by Eric Levenson*

# CMS Undergraduate Major Nearly Ready for Liftoff

By Henry Jenkins and William Uricchio, CMS directors

Spring semester will mark the culmination of a long struggle. Five years ago, the Committee on Undergraduate Programs (CUP) together with the Committee on Curricula (CoC) approved an experimental S.B. program in Comparative Media Studies. The award of even this tentative status was something of a hard fought victory since, until this point, no interdisciplinary majors – experimental or otherwise – had been granted. The Institute, steeped in a long-standing culture of disciplines and departments, was apprehensive about such a dramatic move. But CMS was fortunate to find support among our sponsoring sections (Foreign Languages and Literatures, Literature, and Writing and Humanistic Studies), SHASS, and across the Institute generally. Our departure from the unwritten rules was marked by a change in the name of our degree: the ‘major departure’ in CMS became simply a ‘major’. There was one hitch: we were granted a five-year license to demonstrate our program’s viability and fulfill a number of criteria.

Pinocchio comes to mind, not just because of his transmedia presence and repeated iterations in manga and anime (come to think of it, Osamu Tezuka’s Astro Boy has some interesting potentials as an analogy for CMS), but because, cobbled together from unruly pieces of wood, and balancing poverty and resourcefulness, he was driven by a desire to become a real boy. The CMS undergraduate program, too, has been pulled together from sometimes disparate bits, and has had its share of balancing acts, all with the goal of becoming a real major. However, Pinocchio provides an analogy that one would not want to press too far (we are certainly irrepressible and adventurous, but not even CMS’s critics would be able to do much with the storylines about the donkey and the long nose). We are now at an important juncture where, five years later, having just been reviewed and unanimously supported by the CUP and CoC, we are about to face the Faculty Policy Committee and the Faculty for final approval as a real major. Stay tuned.

The past few years have seen a distinct climate change at MIT. The Task Force on the Undergraduate Educational Commons



CMS co-directors Henry Jenkins and William Uricchio

[2006] observed that many MIT students “increasingly seek to explore professional paths that do not neatly map onto the traditional disciplines and major programs that have long been offered.” And recent discussions of ways to reinvigorate the undergraduate curriculum have increasingly turned to the kinds of cross-disciplinary, trans-disciplinary and even multi-disciplinary approaches to education that characterize both the CMS undergraduate and graduate programs. Collaborative and cross-disciplinary to the core, CMS can respond quickly to the dynamic reconfigurations of the professional, educational and commercial media landscape, creatively deploying resources that are normally dispersed across the institute. The videogame curriculum that we have been developing stands as an example of this responsiveness, a move attested to by the pool of students who have selected a joint engineering and humanities major in CMS.

A group of 25 CMS faculty met last semester to redesign the mid-tier of the major, currently occupied by CMS.400. In its place, majors will have a choice of four new courses that embody the core principles

of CMS. Entitled *Media and Methods*, the courses thematically address hearing, performing, reading and seeing – across media, across cultures, and across time. The first of these courses will be offered next year by **Jay Scheib** (Music and Theater Arts), who will explore performance in such spaces as environmental theater, live audio tours, and everyday life; and next Spring, **Glorianna Davenport** (Media Lab) will teach a course on seeing and expression, examining photography, sculpture, interactive media and visual approaches to narrative. These courses and those to follow the year after, both in their cross-disciplinary construction and their intent, reflect the strengths of this major departure from disciplinarity as usual. Together with the organization of thematically coherent course clusters parallel to the videogame curriculum, the ‘new’ CMS major demonstrates the potential of this innovative approach at a moment of rapid media change.

Add to this mix the opportunities afforded by the graduate CMS program, the research projects (this semester, for example, GAMBIT alone is employing 25 UROPs), the visiting scholars program, and the weekly colloquium and Communications Forum events, and the steady growth of the CMS major comes as no surprise. We are now the largest major in the humanities, and as our graduates accrete, we are building an increasingly compelling alumni network. This issue of *In Medias Res* offers updates on these various activities, and we plan to feature more of our undergraduates in the pages of our next issue.

Before closing, we wish to extend a warm welcome to **Doris Rusch**, a GAMBIT postdoctoral associate; **Steve Ollé**, a postdoctoral fellow affiliated with C3; **Marleigh Norton**, GAMBIT project manager; and **Ellen Hume**, who has joined us as Research Director of The Center for Future Civic Media, a collaborative effort between CMS and the Media Lab. Their profiles can be found in this issue of *IMR*, starting with Ellen’s, if you’ll turn the page...

# MIT Center for Future Civic Media Welcomes Ellen Hume

By Huma Yusuf

Before she was appointed as Research Director for the MIT Center for Future Civic Media last December, Ellen Hume attended several brainstorming sessions and open meetings at the center. It was immediately apparent to students and researchers that she was both a seasoned journalist and a dedicated pedagogue. Hume would diligently take notes through the largely informal meetings, ask people to elaborate on interesting points or examples that they raised, and find speakers who piqued her interest after the meetings to chat further. At the same time, Hume did not shirk from asking students difficult questions, demanding clarity and thoughtfulness from them as they brainstormed ideas. She followed up with students on their project proposals, suggesting reading materials, offering encouragement, or warning that a project's scope was too wide. Owing to this early involvement, few were surprised to learn that Hume would be spearheading the center and articulating its vision.

What might be less apparent from first impressions is that Hume is equally at ease with leadership as she is with reporting or teaching. Hume joins the center after leaving her post as the founding director of UMass Boston's Center on Media and Society. She is also the founding editor and publisher of the *New England Ethnic Newswire*, an online database of the ethnic press that



aims to create an ethnic media wire service to generate regional community stories that could go national. Previously, Hume was the executive director and senior fellow at Harvard University's Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy.

Hume's confidence in leadership positions at esteemed media and journalism centers stems from the fact that she has over 30 years of experience as a reporter. After graduating from Harvard University with a degree in American history and literature, Hume strived to break into journalism, a male-dominated field in the late 1960s. Determined to make a difference, Hume went on to become a staff reporter for the *Los Angeles Times* and a political correspondent for *The Wall Street Journal*. As a broadcast journalist, she pushed for 'resource journalism', a multimedia approach to reporting. Hume founded PBS's Democracy Project and developed news programs that encouraged citizen engagement in public

affairs. She also created *PBS Debate Night*, a nationally televised congressional leadership debate, and *Follow the Money*, a series on the role of money in American politics. Hume has also appeared as a commentator on CNN's *Reliable Sources* and as a panelist on PBS's *Washington Week in Review*.

What students are bound to enjoy most about Hume is her ability to be self-reflective. After all, a civic-minded center can't function without healthy internal debate and scrutiny. Luckily, Hume is long accustomed to analyzing her field and has published widely on the role of journalism in society, the profession's ethics, failings, and evolution in the face of technological advances. "Media Missionaries", a report for the Knight Foundation, analyzes American journalism training abroad while "Tabloids, Talk Shows, and the Future of News", a study for the Annenberg Washington Program, went on to garner Penn State's Bart Richards Award for Media Criticism. Hume's ability to simultaneously accomplish and critique will ensure that the center remains focused on its goal of facilitating civic engagement and community building through technology.

More about Ms. Hume can be found on her personal site at <http://www.ellenhume.com>.

## ABOUT IN MEDIAS RES

*In Medias Res* is published twice a year by:

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### Our Evolving Look

*In Medias Res* was redesigned in 2005 and is constantly evolving. The body font is Minion Pro, the headline font is Myriad Pro, and certain other splash text is set in Mrs. Eaves.



# The New Games Curriculum at MIT

By Clara Fernández-Vara, GAMBIT Research Associate

The labs of MIT were the cradle of one of the first videogames in history, *Spacewar!*, around 1962 (give or take a year earlier or later depending on the sources). The following decade, *Zork*, one of the first text adventures, was also created by a group of students of the MIT Dynamic Modelling Group. In subsequent years, MIT students and alumni have gone on to make great and influential games; *Rock Band* is the latest example, with nearly a third of Harmonix being made up of MIT alumni – including CEO Alex Rigopulos and CTO Eran Egozy. CMS graduate **Gordon Fellows** '05 and former GAMBIT UROP **Mark Grimm** (Management '07) are both working as production assistants there as well.

In spite of the prominent role of these alumni in videogame production and the historical relevance of MIT in videogame history, the institution does not have an officially recognized videogame-oriented curriculum. Here at Comparative Media Studies, we are working hard to change this, giving students an opportunity to make games and analyze them critically as part of their coursework (rather than only in their spare time). In doing so, we are trying to address the needs of many students who are interested in the field and come to our program, which teaches the only explicitly videogame-related courses in the Institute.

This initiative consists of a cluster of courses that are grouped into a series of videogame-related tracks, each relating to a specific aspect of videogame studies. These aspects range from videogame theory and criticism to game design, production, programming, visual design and audio design, as well as the development of interactive applications for education. Apart from courses specifically offered by CMS, the recommended curriculum incorporates relevant courses from various departments around MIT. This course list should prove useful not only to CMS students, but also to undergraduates from other majors who may be interested in videogames.

The study of videogames, whether theoretical or applied, must be highly interdisciplinary. This plays to the strengths of



GAMBIT Video Game Scholar **Jesper Juul** lectures on casual games during IAP.

our interdisciplinary major, which already draws upon courses from ten sections of the Institute. Many of the electives recommended in the various tracks are courses in other departments, from Music and Theatre Arts to Mechanical Engineering. Therefore, the course selections also will serve students in other departments who may not want to focus on videogames but may wish to explore the courses in their major or minor that relate to the field.

The new videogame curriculum joins pre-existing academic activities in CMS. First, there are two videogame-related research programs currently underway. The Education Arcade research project, now in its fourth year, develops videogames to encourage and support learning. In the newly-established Singapore-MIT GAMBIT Game Lab, we work on applying academic research questions to address problems and concerns in videogame development that the videogames industry cannot afford to address, building bridges between institutions of higher education in Singapore and MIT in the process. CMS also offers courses focusing on the analysis and creation of digital games to go along with the work being done in the research labs. Last term, **Alice Robison** taught Introduction to Videogame Theory and Analysis (CMS.600/ CMS.998) for the second year running, and this Spring a new Game Design (CMS.608/ CMS.864) course will be offered by **Philip**

**Tan, Jesper Juul, Clara Fernández-Vara and Doris Rusch.**

Also new this Spring is **Nick Montfort's** The Word Made Digital (CMS.609J/ CMS.846/ 21W.764J), which will examine text, language and writing in a wide spectrum of creative digital media, including videogames. These subjects complement two existing ones, Computer Games and Simulations for Education and Exploration (11.127J / CMS.590J / 11.252J / CMS.863J) and Character Design and World Making (CMS.601 / CMS.999), which will be taught again this term by **Eric Klopfer** and **Frank Espinosa**, respectively. All of these courses incorporate project-based learning, a component of the "applied humanities" approach distinctive to CMS.

CMS plans to identify several recommended course clusters – in film and television, creative industries, journalism, and the like – applicable to other careers attractive to our majors. The creation of the videogame cluster also serves as a way to collaborate and strengthen the relationships between CMS and other departments at MIT, both within the School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences and outside of it.

More about the Education Arcade can be found at <http://www.educationarcade.org>; more on GAMBIT is at <http://gambit.mit.edu>.



# LIVE ACTION ANIME? ONLY AT MIT!

BY HENRY JENKINS

When I heard several months ago that some of my MIT colleagues and students were helping to stage a performance of Live Action Anime, I knew I had to be there. I anticipated the experience with a kind of “only at MIT” amusement – not sure what to expect but knowing that the results would be dazzling.

The performance, *Madness at Mokuba*, opened with a spectacular battle between two giant robots staged against the backdrop of projected anime images and accompanied by an awe-inspiring soundtrack of metallic clanks and engine sounds which instantly reminded me of my first experience watching *Robotech* and *Star Blazers* several decades ago. I didn’t know what live action anime would look like but as the performance continued, I was more and more impressed with the craft and research which went into this performance.

The show was staged by SLIPPAGE: Performance, Culture, and Technology, a collective of artists and researchers established in 2003, which seeks to explore “connections between acts of performance, formations of culture, and interventions of technology toward an end of original theatrical storytelling.”

*Madness* was scripted by Ian Condry, an associate professor of Japanese cultural studies in the MIT Foreign Language Program. Condry is the author of the recently published *Hip-Hop Japan: Rap and the Paths of Cultural Globalization*. Condry is now working on a new book, tentatively titled *Global Anime: The Making of Japan’s Transnational Popular Culture*, which emerges from fieldwork spent in Tokyo animation studios. (I was lucky enough to tag along with Condry during one of his trips to Japan, getting to visit Studio Ghibli and getting some behind-the-scenes perspectives from the producer of

*Pokémon*. I’ve described some of my impressions of seeing cosplayers in Yoyogi Park in posts to my weblog, *Confessions of an Aca-Fan*, at [www.henryjenkins.org](http://www.henryjenkins.org).)

Condry runs the Cool Japan program, a joint effort between Harvard and MIT, which regularly brings to Cambridge leading researchers, producers, writers, and others involved in the production and distribution of Japanese popular culture. In an e-mail interview, Condry shared some of the thinking which went into this production:

One of the things that interested me about the live action anime project is that it got me thinking about the many ways that anime crosses over from the “virtual” to the “real.” The most obvious example is cosplay and the many forms of licensed merchandise, such as toys and models, that in effect bring anime through the screen and into people’s hands. When fans take anime and manga characters, and use them to create their own fanzine manga (*dōjinshi*), a similar kind of translation effect is underway, that is, taking imagined characters, re-imagining through our own minds, and the creating something new in the world.

It shows how inaccurate in some ways the distinction between virtual and real is, and I think that partly explains why debates about the division between the two worlds has slackened in recent years.

During fieldwork research in Tokyo, I have also been struck by how often the term “real” (*riaru*, in Japanese) comes up when anime creators talk about what makes particular

works distinctive. Anime creators always struggle with challenge of bringing the “real” into the “virtual” space of animation.

The original *Mobile Suit Gundam* series, which began airing in 1979, is looked back on now as the moment when “super robot” anime, with its happy heroes, child audiences, and 30-minute resolutions, gave way to “real robot” anime, in which war was represented in a more realistic manner. Real had other connotations in this context as well. In real robot anime, so-called heroes are often despised for their violence and wanton destruction, audiences were older, and the stories seldom had clean-cut endings, but rather meandered through the gray zones of war’s ambiguities, hypocrisies, and senseless violence. *Gundam* turned robots from heroes into mere weapons of war.

In the end, the notion of live action anime may be paradoxical, but it also reflects some of the most fascinating aspects of anime as a medium.

Anime fans have long debated whether anime is best understood as a genre (or perhaps a set of related genres), as an aesthetic style, as a mode of production, or as a transmedia phenomenon. Informed by Condry’s theories and research, the MIT show managed to cover all of these bases and then some.

The show’s characters (see below) each embody archetypes from the anime tradition, collectively taking us on a tour of its core genre elements and linking them to larger trends in Japanese society and culture, including “giant robots, a Japanese schoolgirl, a lovelorn otaku, a masterless samurai, a gamer woman, evil media magnates, and a vengeful deathgod who all battle for truth, justice, and the anime way.”

As the story opens, the protagonists, including Schoolgirl and her sidekick, Sam Rye, and their arch rivals, Flux and Ota Ku, are preparing their robots for the Mokuba Institute of Technology’s annual giant robot battle. Yet, something strange is going on. Their classmates are falling prey to VIRTIGO, a strange mental illness which involves altered states of consciousness. We learn that the

illness has been manufactured by an evil media conglomerate (The Infinite Channel Network) in order to produce a state of constant consumption, transmitted through the use of flash rhythms similar to those that alarmists claimed caused epileptic seizures when Pokémon was first released.

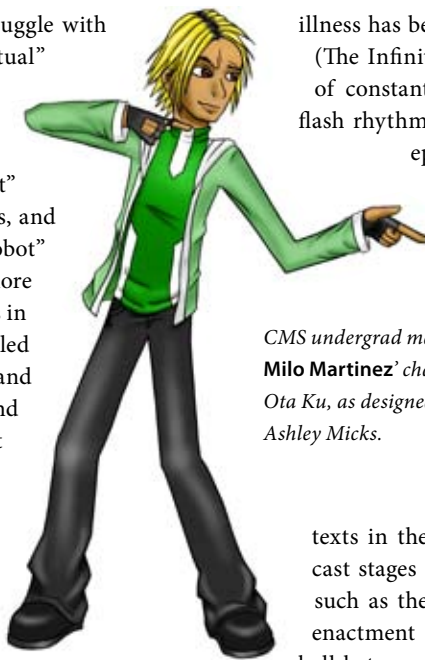
Falling prey to what is described as a “Neo-Postmodern Trans-subjectivity syndrome,” victims “fall from one reality into another.”

As the corporate scientists spell out their plans to use anime to achieve global dominance, they become the vehicles for Condry and the show’s cast to explore the historical evolution of the anime movement. As scenes from *Astro Boy*, *Gundam*, *Neon Genesis: Evangelion*, and *Pokémon*, among other defining

texts in the anime tradition, are projected on the wall, the cast stages a gender-bending re-enactment of key moments, such as the creation of Astro Boy. There’s a very funny re-enactment of *Pong* with actors moving a giant cardboard ball between two massive paddles. Cyberpunk has long been a vehicle for authors and animators to reflect upon the influence of media on contemporary culture, and this high-tech plot provides an ideal vehicle for Condry to express his own insights into the cultural and economic factors which have enabled anime to straddle genres, to reach across multiple media platforms, and to shape youth culture world-wide.

The performance lovingly captured the anime aesthetic. While the performers are live, the voices are dubbed, capturing the slight mismatch between lips moving and spoken language which is part of most westerners’ experience of watching anime. (During the question and answer period, one anime-savvy spectator asked when they might see the subtitled edition of this performance and offered to help launch a fansub project!) The soundtrack wittily samples effects from classic games and anime which sparked some audience members to shout out the references – and trust me, a high percentage of those attending the show were deeply immersed in games, anime, and other aspects of geek culture.

The acting style was designed to convey some of the limited animation techniques most closely associated with anime – even including repeated gestures which hint at the longstanding practice



CMS undergrad major  
**Milo Martinez**’ character  
Ota Ku, as designed by  
Ashley Micks.



Opposite page, top: Cast members of Live Action Anime 2007, including Holli Marie Rachall in blue (center). Triptych above, from left: Sam Rye (Andrew Long) and Schoolgirl (Maryia Lu); Lux (Ashley Micks) and Ota (Milo Martinez) with Quantum Foam (Jules Lopolito); Assoc. Director and MLK Professor Melissa Blanco as Mym, the mysterious mom. Photographs by Eric Levenson.





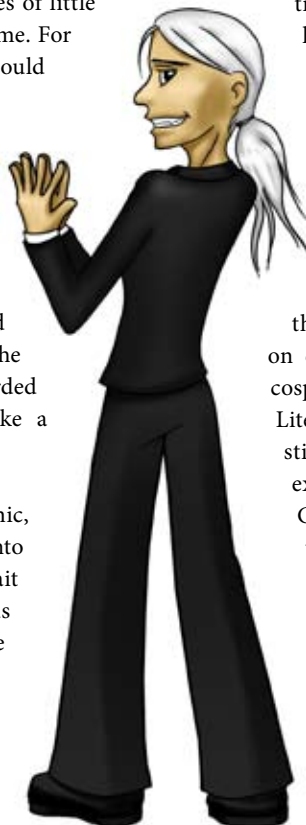
Above, from left: Giant Robot (Kris Erkiletian, in a suit of his own design) battles Quantum Foam; The suits: Chip (June Liang) and Bo (Kim Baldauf) and the cast, including extra schoolgirl (Sandra Pastrana) in the back. Below: Kim Baldauf's character Bo, as designed by Ashley Micks. Photographs by Eric Levenson.

of recycling footage at certain generic moments – transformation scenes for example – in some series.

The show's director, **Thomas F. DeFrantz**, who is a Professor of Theater Arts and the current head of the MIT Program in Women's and Gender Studies, shared with me some reflections about the stage design and choreography for *Madness*:

To construct movement for the piece, I often had my dancers think of themselves as if 'in camera.' I asked, "if you were the animator, how would you draw this moment?" The piece is based on stillness, rather than on motion. In many anime, you don't see every bit of a gesture, just the edges. This took a technique of 'clenching' the body, strangely enough, to reveal the edges of each silhouette that stood for a character emotion. More than anything, we had to work against the casualness of everyday gesture, in which there might be many silhouettes of little interest to an animator or someone watching anime. For this work, we had to focus on the silhouettes that could reveal character, attitude, and opinion all at once. The performers developed their 'signature poses' and we worked from those to generate a language of motion. In the end, it was much harder than I thought it might be to go through the entire piece in this sort of 'physical karaoke' but without ever speaking a word. It helped us reconsider the importance of breath and sound as components of human expression because in the live action anime, working with the pre-recorded soundtracks, the performers never got to make a sound.

The costume and make-up were equally iconic, designed to transform the student performers into cartoon characters. Here, for example, is a portrait drawn by castmember Ashley Micks of the villainous Bo as played by Kim Baldauf. On the preceding page is Micks' portrait of Ota Ku, one of the young people who helps overcome old school rivalries and work together to defeat the evil corporations.



**Milo Martinez**, an undergraduate major in the Comparative Media Studies program, describes the challenges he faced bringing this larger-than-life character to the stage:

I can honestly say that *Live Action Anime* was an experience worth having. As a dancer, cosplayer, and anime-fan, I saw it as a perfect fit for me. The entire piece is gesture based, and a lot of focus was placed on creating phrases with our bodies. "How can our body say this sentence for us?" was a common question we asked ourselves while constructing the choreography. Since our voices were "dubbed over" we had to make sure that our movement could speak for us.

We were very particular in everything we did, each character had a walk, pose, attitude, and each needed to agree with the others. As an Anime fan, it was important to me to try and make my movements big and crazy, if it looks like it hurt, then it probably did. How fast can I run from this side of the stage to the other? How high can I jump? A lot of this show I pushed my body to its limits to try and create a character that had indeed walked out of a screen.

As his comments suggest, Milo came to the show with extensive experience in cosplay, a form of costuming and performance which thrives within the anime fan community. Indeed, Milo was interviewed on camera as part of a series of short documentaries on cosplay we have been producing for Project nml (New Media Literacies). One segment from this documentary, which is still in production, features Milo talking about his cosplay experience and suggests the ways that these fans are, as Condry has suggested, already involved in finding ways to translate the look and feel of anime into physical reality. To view the clip, please visit my blog, where this piece first appeared, at [http://henryjenkins.org/2007/12/post\\_5.html](http://henryjenkins.org/2007/12/post_5.html).

For more information on *Live Action Anime*, please visit <http://www.liveactionanime2007.com>. For more information on the Cool Japan program, please visit <http://web.mit.edu/condry/www/cooljapan>.



# Spring Course Profile: Media@MIT

By William Uricchio

It still happens to me. After meeting a colleague from somewhere at MIT for the first time and exchanging the usual data points, I'm asked if Comparative Media Studies is the same as the Media Lab. I say no, make clear the differences (and sites of overlap), only to hear "I didn't know that we had media at MIT..."

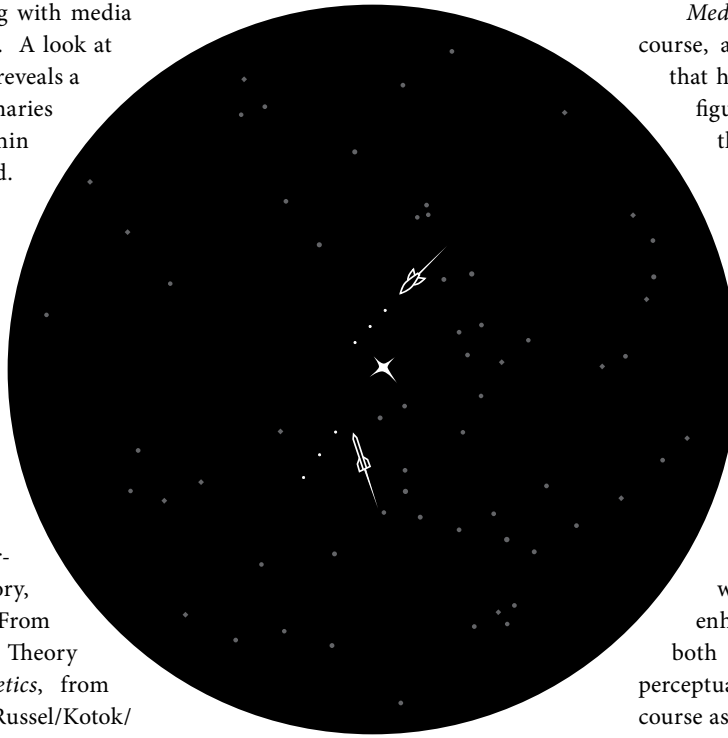
In fact, MIT's tradition of innovation in thinking about and working with media is nothing short of exceptional. A look at "What is CMS" on our website reveals a few of the Institute's many luminaries and situates CMS squarely within the trajectory they have provided. And courses such as *Media in Transition* and *Media Theory and Methods* probe some of these developments more deeply. This semester, I'm teaching a course that focuses on this rich tradition: *Media in Cultural Context: Media@MIT* (21L.715 / CMS 871).

The course blurb sketches the terrain: MIT's researchers have made countless interventions into media theory, technology and application. From Claude Shannon's Information Theory to Norbert Wiener's *Cybernetics*, from Vannevar Bush's Memex to Russel/Kotok/Graetz's *Spacewar!*, from the work of the Center for Advanced Visual Studies (CAVS) to the Media Lab, from Ithiel de Sola Pool's *Technologies of Freedom* to Sherry Turkle's *Life on the Screen*, from Nicholas Negroponte's *Being Digital* to Noam Chomsky's *Manufacturing Consent*, these and many more achievements attest to the formative work carried out at the Institute. Add to this the work of Tim Berners-Lee (the World Wide Web), Harold 'Doc' Edgerton (stroboscopic photography), Richard Leacock (direct cinema and modified 8mm cinematography), Amar Bose (psychoacoustics and the sound reduction headphones that bear his name), and alumni such as Robert Metcalfe (Ethernet), and the remarkable scale of MIT's intervention into the world of media becomes clear.

These people, inventions and labs have triggered new lines of inquiry, altered the way we see, and had profound impact on our thinking about and use of media. It would not be an exaggeration to characterize this work as foundational – a term that suggests one dimension of coherence in an otherwise

on within CMS – thrives in border areas, on the edges of established disciplines where frequent contact with other paradigms generates precisely the sorts of insights that can be transformative. But in an academic world still organized around disciplines, the very trans-disciplinary dynamics that have driven MIT's tradition of innovation also help to account for its low profile.

*Media@MIT* is a research-focused course, and concerned with the narratives that have been constructed around these figures and with the dominant readings that have been deployed in making sense of them. By remapping these many activities and grouping them together in new ways, we will trace lines of shared interest and new patterns of coherence. These patterns will appear on multiple levels, from the macro level of an institutionally specific research field ('the MIT school' anyone?), to the micro level that binds together the work of Edgerton, Leacock, and Bose through their concern with using media technologies to enhance encounters with the real, both challenging and sharpening our perceptual apparatus in the process. The course asks whether a new set of interpretive strategies can render visible the until-now invisible. Consistent with the border areas it seeks to investigate, the course will reflect upon and draw from the representational tactics of literature, history, STS, cultural studies, and the mother disciplines of MIT's various media researchers in an attempt to "connect the dots," linking our current research and curricular endeavors in CMS to this much deeper tradition. Media at MIT? The answer goes beyond 'yes' to a fundamental repositioning of the term 'media' from the familiar domain of media texts to a larger order that includes systems, technologies, and implications.



*Russel/Kotok/Graetz's SpaceWar! inspired the illuminated glass art by the doors to the Singapore-MIT GAMBIT Game Lab, which was designed in 2007 by Philip Tan and Geoffrey Long.*

topically diverse set of endeavors. A distinctive cultural modality also underlies this work, and while it perhaps lacks the neat descriptive focus of 'the Columbia school' or 'the Toronto school' or 'the Chicago school' (see Katz et al, *Canonic Media Texts*), it derives from conditions that are distinctive to MIT. Here I refer to the Institute's relatively 'flat' structure and the manner in which trans-disciplinary collaborations are both administratively facilitated and actively stimulated. The work of these luminaries – like the work that goes

For more information on the project, visit <http://cms.mit.edu/academics/courseInfo.php?courseID=21L.715>.

# HyperStudio Examines *Missed Opportunities* Between United States and Iran

By Huma Yusuf

When the question of whether technology can foster international diplomacy arises, people often think of Western governments offering military solutions to the developing world. At MIT, that conversation sometimes proceeds in a different direction. HyperStudio, the Laboratory for Digital Humanities, is working on a more peaceful way to harness creative technological options to facilitate diplomatic relations through a project titled *US-Iran: Missed Opportunities (1997-2005)*. The project explores the period of Mohammad Khatemi's presidency and asks why bilateral relations between Iran and the US did not improve in that period. As such, it is amongst HyperStudio's widest projects in scope in terms of collaboration, adaptive potential, and political and academic import. At the same time, the project continues to further HyperStudio's commitment to making online scholarship more dynamic.

*US-Iran: Missed Opportunities* is a collaborative project, joining the expertise of the Center for International Studies (CIS) at MIT, the Watson Institute for International Studies at Brown University, the National Security Archive at George Washington University (GWU), and MIT's HyperStudio. John Tirman, executive director of CIS, is a foreign policy expert who specializes in projects related to the Persian Gulf; Janet Lang and Jim Blight at Brown University developed the concept of critical oral history that has been applied to projects such as the Cuban Missile Crisis or the Vietnam War and also drives the US-Iran project; Malcolm Byrne at GWU, who has written widely on Iran, specializes on research of classified documents; HyperStudio has been charged with bringing a conceptual framework, political sensitivity, and a wealth of materials together through a highly engaging and innovative research platform.

The research platform that will house both English- and Farsi-language policy documents is HyperStudio's primary contri-



For *US-Iran: Missed Opportunities (1997-2005)*, HyperStudio developed a research platform to house both English- and Farsi-language policy documents.

bution to the project. The platform aims to empower scholars and policy makers to collaboratively investigate and interpret the digital repository of documents. As the Director of HyperStudio **Kurt Fendt** puts it, “for this project, the goal of the platform is to support the political dialogue among policy makers and scholars from both sides.”

On the nuts-and-bolts level, the research platform comprises a multifaceted browser that allows for creative engagement with and different representations of the core materials in the online database. In addition to policy documents, these materials include historical documents, news articles, personal correspondence between policy makers, and some video content. The interface integrates

and interlinks these materials so as to reveal spatial and temporal relationships in the content uploaded by both sides. The platform also highlights clusters of importance where additional research can be conducted. “Our system will allow scholars and policy makers to see a visual representation of when changes happen, where information clusters, and when certain social practices evolve. You can trace one actor, one location, or one issue through the entire digital repository,” explains Fendt. In addition – as a decisive step towards digital scholarship – researchers have the possibility to create their interpretations and arguments about a specific topic, set of materials, or events in wiki-like multimedia documents called “narratives.” Live links to the materials in the repository function as references and allow the community of scholars to follow the author's reasoning, thus creating a basis for further discussion among the community.

Most importantly, the dynamism of the research platform will not be restricted to the *US-Iran* project alone. Titled *Repertoire*, the research platform has been developed with adaptability in mind and can be extended to different functionalities without having to rewrite the base software. Since the platform has been developed in conversation with scholars who are invested in using new media technologies to improve academia, *Repertoire* can be used to investigate projects from a variety of disciplines. Currently, HyperStudio plans to deploy the platform in several other projects, including the *Comédie Française Performance Archive*, *Global Shakespeare*, and *Tories, Timid, or True Blue*, an online educational environment providing access to the Old North Church's archives.

For more information on the project, please visit <http://web.mit.edu/hyperstudio> or e-mail [hyperstudio@mit.edu](mailto:hyperstudio@mit.edu).

# Futures of Entertainment 2 Conference Introduces Backchan.nl

By Huma Yusuf

Only at MIT can the format of a conference be as riveting as the content presented at its panels. The second annual Futures of Entertainment Conference – hosted by CMS and the Convergence Culture Consortium in November 2007 – was equally lauded by participants for the new media-related issues it brought to the table as well as its unique setup. The conference introduced backchan.nl, a web-based backchannel system that allows audience members at a conference presentation to propose questions and vote on which one should be put to the panelists. Backchan.nl was developed in-house by **Joshua Green**, the research manager of C3; Drew Harry, a master's student in the Sociable Media Group at the MIT Media Lab; and Dan Guitierrez, an undergraduate in Course 6, the electrical engineering and computer science department. Their paper on the system titled “backchan.nl: Integrating Backchannels With Physical Space” will be presented in Italy at the SIGCHI conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems in April 2008.

Unlike other online backchannel options commonly used in classrooms and at presentations, backchan.nl is less concerned with connecting audience members with each other than with enabling the audience to collectively pose popular questions to the presenters in the limited time available. Audience members with laptops were able to visit the backchan.nl website to propose questions and vote, either positively or negatively, on the other queries they found there. To ensure that backchan.nl was well-integrated with the panel discussion and did not exclude audience members who may not be online, the top ten posts from backchan.nl were displayed on a large projection screen facing the audience, on a monitor for panelists to look at, and on a monitor for the moderator's use.

Backchan.nl was a hit with the audience, who appreciated the attempt to make the conference interactive in an unprecedented way. During the course of the two-day conference, 224 questions were posed by audience members with an average of over 35



*Liveblogging the Futures of Entertainment 2 Conference (from left): Ivan Askwith SM '07, Derek Johnson (University of Wisconsin-Madison) and Lan Xuan Le SM '09.*

*Photograph by Kevin Driscoll, CC-BY-SA: <http://flickr.com/photos/believekevin/2194603803/>*

questions being asked of each panel.

Mark Kelsey, a conference participant from the Harvard Extension School, enjoyed the way backchan.nl allowed audience members “to give feedback, develop their ideas, and create their own communities.”

Anthropologist Grant McCracken was also intrigued by the backchan.nl system. “I love the format of the conference,” he said. “It draws out what's interesting about what people have to say and then makes them field questions from different perspectives on the fly.”

Timothy Stoneman, a postdoctoral fellow at MIT's Science, Technology, and Society program, echoed McCracken's sentiments. “The backchannel was a great supplementary device that fleshed out the themes of the conference and allowed people to participate in a more direct way,” explained Stoneman.

Of course, there were some dissenters who felt that the backchannel did not facilitate discussion in a meaningful way. Conference participant Michael Hastings-Black complained that “people think that more screens means greater interactivity and better thought, which isn't always true.”

Interestingly, panelists and moderators enjoyed using backchan.nl. Faris Yakob, a

presenter from the London-based company Naked Communications, was extremely enthusiastic about the conference set-up. “I love the format,” he said. “It's this whole MIT geek thing; there's a backchannel, questions on the screens, and everyone's blogging. It's a new way of thinking about conference interaction that we haven't got near to thinking about in the UK.”

Similarly, moderator **Sam Ford** said he “enjoyed the chance to get real-time feedback from the audience. Audience questions are often out of context by the time the discussion section of a presentation begins. With the backchannel, I was available to address the audience's issues while they were relevant and guide speakers in directions that the audience wanted them to go.”

Ultimately, conference organizers were excited by the potential of the backchan.nl system and plan to use it in future conferences as a way to involve remote participants with those present at panel discussions by connecting them through the same mediated system.

*For more information on the Futures of Entertainment conference, visit the event's website at <http://www.convergenceculture.org/futuresofentertainment>.*



# CMS Colloquium Series: Spring 2008

02.07.08 | 5-7 PM | 2-105

## David Claerbout

**David Claerbout's** work in video projection foregrounds the presence of time for the viewer, bringing together the qualities of moving and still images in an often disquieting analogue to the practices of photography and painting. His approach uses the premises of film, photography and time in order to do away with their individual monopolies as in works such as *Vietnam 1967, near Duc Pho (reconstruction after Hiromishi Mine)* (2001) where the projection appears to be a still image, but is, in fact, almost imperceptibly moving. More recently he focuses on the effects of time, time in narration and time on the gaze of the viewer in works such as *Bordeaux Piece* (2004) and *White House* (2006) where the continuous repeating of a story suspends the rules of classical movie telling and the expectation of the viewer in order to give way to an almost physical sensation of time and nature.

*Co-sponsored by the List Visual Arts Center*

02.14.08 | 5-7 PM | 2-105

## Hollywood's Censor: Joseph I. Breen and the Production Code Administration

*Tom Doherty*

From 1934 to 1954 Joseph I. Breen, a media-savvy Victorian Irishman, reigned over the Production Code Administration, the Hollywood office tasked with censoring the American screen. Though little known outside the ranks of the studio system, this former journalist and public relations agent was one of the most powerful men in the motion picture industry. As enforcer of the puritanical Production Code, Breen dictated "final cut" over more movies than any other individual in the history of American cinema. His editorial decisions left a profound impact on the images and values projected by Hollywood during the Great Depression, World War II, and the Cold War. **Thomas Doherty** is professor of American studies at Brandeis University. He serves on the editorial board of *Cineaste* and *Cinema Journal* and is film review editor for the *Journal of American History*. His previous books include *Cold War, Cool Medium: Television, McCarthyism, and American Culture* (2003) and *Pre-Code Hollywood: Sex, Immorality, and Insurrection in American Cinema, 1930-1934* (1999).

02.21.08 | 5-7 PM | 2-105

## Viral Media: Hows and Whys

*Mike Rubenstein, Natalie Lent, Shenja van der Graaf*

Non-traditional and viral marketing campaigns raise questions about the content status of advertising and the authenticity of commercial art. This panel discussion will consider the challenges of engaging audiences in unconventional ways, looking at the status of viral media and the nature of non-traditional marketing campaigns. Berkman Center Fellow and C3 Consulting Researcher **Shenja van der Graaf**

will moderate the conversation with **Natalie Lent** from Fanscape and **Mike Rubenstein** of The Barbarian Group.

*Co-sponsored by the Convergence Culture Consortium*

02.28.08 | 5-7 PM | Stata Center TSMC Lobby and 32-155

## CMS Research Fair 2008

*CMS Research Groups*

On February 28, CMS will hold its annual Research Fair, a chance to highlight our latest research and bring attention to new research staff and initiatives. In addition to displays in the Stata lobby, this year's event will include a panel discussion with current research staff, led by **Henry Jenkins** and **William Uricchio**. This discussion will consider the theoretical contributions of CMS research and the role each initiative plays in the CMS research culture. The Fair will be held on Thursday, Feb. 28th from 5-7 PM in the Stata Center TSMC lobby. The panel discussion will begin at 6 PM. Refreshments will be served.

03.06.08 | 5-7 PM | Bartos Theater

## Communications Forum: Prime Time in Transition

*Howard Gordon, Barbara Hall, John Romano*

The prime-time series has been a central narrative form in America for the last half-century, as the Hollywood movie had been in a previous era. Are the radical transformations of television in recent years challenging this domination? How has series TV changed over the past 20 years? What does the prolonged writers' strike signify for the future of TV fiction and the medium as a whole? Leading writer-producers **Barbara Hall** (*Women's Murder Club*, *Judging Amy*, *Joan of Arcadia*) and **John Romano** (*Third Watch*, *Party of Five*, *Hill Street Blues*) will address these and related questions in a candid conversation illustrated by clips from significant series.

03.13.08 | 5-7 PM | Bartos Theater

## Communications Forum: Global Television

*Eggo Müller, Roberta Pearson, William Uricchio*

A salient feature of contemporary TV has been the appearance of programs that appeal more widely across national boundaries than many earlier television shows. Examples include a range of reality shows such as *Big Brother* or *Survivor* as well as fiction series such as *Ugly Betty*, which undergo relatively small facelifts before being introduced to new audiences. Many American programs – e.g., *Lost*, *Desperate Housewives* – travel abroad with no alterations, as country-specific promotion and distribution strategies adjust them to their new national contexts. In this forum, distinguished media scholars **Eggo Müller**, **Roberta Pearson** and **William Uricchio** will discuss the origins and significance of the international distribution of television formats and programs.

03.20.08 | 5-7 PM | 2-105

**Denis Dyack**

**Denis Dyack** is the founder and president of Silicon Knights. In this capacity, he oversees the creation and development of games and continues to further the growth of the company. Dyack is a noted authority on interactive software development and offers valuable insight into the process of designing next-generation games that appeal to the masses. Under Dyack's direction, Silicon Knights has evolved into one of the top independent interactive software developers in the world. Dyack (B. Phed, H. B.Sc, M. Sc.) founded Silicon Knights in 1992 after publishing *Cyber Empires* in 1991. Since that time, Silicon Knights has moved from creating PC games to premiere AAA console titles, such as *Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain* for the original PlayStation. Working with Nintendo as a second party, Silicon Knights created the critically acclaimed *Eternal Darkness*. Together with Nintendo, Silicon Knights worked with Konami to create another critically acclaimed game, *Metal Gear Solid: Twin Snakes*. Dyack and his team are currently working with Microsoft on the *Too Human* trilogy for the Xbox 360, and developing an exciting new game for Sega of America.

*Co-sponsored by the Singapore-MIT GAMBIT Game Lab*

04.03.08 | 5-7 PM | 2-105

**The Show Business High Wire Act:  
Walking the Tightrope Between Studio Filmmaking  
and Independent Production**

*Gregory Anderson*

In the year 2008, artists and businesspersons navigate the vast divide between the world of independent filmmaking and the Hollywood studio system as the lines between the two become increasingly blurred. Pop culture integration – the fusing of music, sports, dance, event programming, reality, and other subcultures geared toward mainstream audiences while highlighting the genre demographic – has become the lifeline for both the artistic and commercial filmmaker. Where does one find the happy medium, or is there one anymore?

Writer, producer, distributor, and president of Tri Destined Films, **Gregory Anderson** has been called a part of the “new” Oscar Micheaux movement as a trailblazer for independent film distribution. Gregory created *Stomp the Yard*, one of the most profitable dance films of all time, and produced, marketed, and theatrically distributed the independent film *Trois*, one of the Top 50 highest grossing Independent Films of its release year according to *Daily Variety*.

04.10.08 | 5-7 PM | Bartos Theater

**Communications Forum:  
Our World Digitized: The Good, the Bad, the Ugly**

*Yochai Benkler, Cass Sunstein*

Much discussion of our impending digital future is insular and without nuance. Skeptics talk mainly among themselves, while utopians and optimists also keep company mainly within their own tribal cultures. This forum challenges this unhelpful division, staging a conversation between two of our country's most thoughtful and influential writers on the promise and the perils of the Internet Age.

**Yochai Benkler** is the Berkman Professor of Entrepreneurial Legal Studies at Harvard, and faculty co-director of the Berkman Center for Internet and Society. He is the author of *The Wealth of Networks: How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom* (2006). **Cass Sunstein** is the Karl N. Llewellyn Distinguished Service Professor of Jurisprudence, Law School and Department of Political Science, University of Chicago. He is the author of many articles and books including, most recently, *Republic.com 2.0* (2007) and *Infotopia: How Many Minds Produce Knowledge* (2006). After graduating from Harvard Law School, he clerked for Justice Benjamin Kaplan of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court and Justice Thurgood Marshall of the U.S. Supreme Court.

*Co-sponsored by the MIT Center for Future Civic Media*

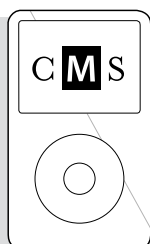
04.16.08 | 5-7 PM | 32-155 (note date and location)

**Remembering Los Angeles in the Digital Age:  
Pat O'Neill's *The Decay of Fiction***

*Edward Dimenber*

Los Angeles artist and special effects virtuoso Pat O'Neill filmed *The Decay of Fiction* (2002) in the landmark Ambassador Hotel, once the center of Hollywood celebrity culture. His film blurs the boundaries between architectural investigation, urban documentation, and aesthetic exploration. At once a poetic homage to classical film genres, it is also a suggestive indication of how remembering the city is changing in response to new technologies.

**Edward Dimenber** is Associate Professor of Film and Media Studies, Visual Studies, and German at the University of California, Irvine. He is author of *Film Noir and the Spaces of Modernity* (2004), co-editor of *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook* (1994), and currently serves as Multimedia Editor of the *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*.

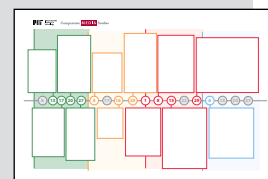


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**Download the Colloquia Poster**

Never miss a CMS Colloquium event again! Go to <http://cms.mit.edu/events> to download a free color 11x17 poster of the CMS Colloquium Series to hang on your wall!



04.24.08 | 5-7 PM | Bartos Theater

### Communications Forum: Youth and Civic Engagement

*Lance Bennett, Ian V. Rowe, Alan Khazei*

The current generation of young citizens is growing up in an age of unprecedented access to information. Will this change their understanding of democracy? What factors will shape their involvement in the political process?

**Lance Bennett** is Ruddick C. Lawrence Professor of Communication and Professor of Political Science at the University of Washington, where he founded and directs the Center for Communication and Civic Engagement. **Ian V. Rowe** is the Vice-President of Strategic Partnerships and Public Affairs for MTV. His department oversees MTV's online community *think* that informs viewers on domestic and global issues, and he is helping supervise MTV's 2008 Choose or Lose campaign, which includes a team of 51 citizen journalists – one in every state and the District of Columbia. **Alan Khazei** co-founded City Year, which enlists more than 1,200 young adults, in 16 communities across America and in Johannesburg South Africa, for a year of full-time community service. He is currently founder and CEO of Be the Change, a non-partisan citizens' civic organization.

*Co-sponsored by the MIT Center for Future Civic Media*

05.01.08 | 6-8 PM (note time) | Bartos Theater

### Moving Through Time and Space

*Chantal Akerman*

The Blaffer Gallery at the Art Museum of the University of Houston, the MIT List Visual Arts Center, The Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, and Miami Art Central/Miami Art Museum are collaborating to organize *Chantal Akerman: Moving through Time and Space*. This is internationally renowned filmmaker and video artist **Chantal Akerman's** first major museum exhibition in the United States. The exhibition will feature five multi-media video installations: her "documentary series" comprised of *D'Est (From the East)*, *Sud*, *From the Other Side*, *La Bas*, and a new work commissioned especially for the exhibition. Chantal Akerman will also be conducting an artist's residency at MIT. This lecture will be followed by the opening reception to the exhibition.

*Co-sponsored by the List Visual Arts Center*

*For details on speakers and events, please visit the CMS Events page at <http://cms.mit.edu/events>. Most colloquia are made available as podcasts a few days after the event at <http://cms.mit.edu>.*

## Digital Writing Group Announces Spring Lineup

Purple Blurb, the Digital Writing study group founded by **Nick Montfort** and co-sponsored by CMS and the Program in Writing and Humanistic Studies, has announced the lineup for its Spring 2008 lecture series.

01.29.08 | 1-7 PM | 14N-233

### Day of Interactive Fiction

Group play sessions hourly 1pm-6pm;  
Q&A with authors Liza Daly, Andrew  
Plotkin and Dan Schmidt 6pm-7pm.



02.20.08 | 6-7 PM | 14N-233

### Aya Karpinska, Lala

*Brown, Literary Arts*

03.11.08 | 6-7 PM | 14N-233

### Ben Miller, Soldier's Story Archive

*MIT, Writing and Humanistic Studies*

04.08.08 | 6-7 PM | 14N-233

### Beth Coleman, Boba Fett's Day Off

*MIT, Writing and Humanistic Studies  
and Comparative Media Studies*

04.29.08 | 6-7 PM | 14N-233

### Daniel Howe, text.curtain

*NYU, Research Media Lab*

Further support for the series is provided by the net.art organization Turbulence and the Electronic Literature Organization (ELO).

*For more information, visit the Purple Blurb website at [http://nickm.com/iff/purple\\_blurb](http://nickm.com/iff/purple_blurb). More information about Turbulence can be found at <http://www.turbulence.org> and more on the ELO can be found at <http://eliterature.org>.*



# CMS Class of 2008 Thesis Presentation Schedule

The CMS Class of 2008 will be giving their thesis presentations on Friday, March 21, 2008 from 11AM to 6PM. The event is tentatively scheduled for room 25-225, but would-be attendees are urged to check <http://cms.mit.edu/events> closer to the date. The event is open to the public; CMS students, faculty, associates and friends of the program are all warmly welcomed to attend.

10:30-11:00 AM

## Coffee and Pastries

11:00-11:45 AM

## Information Visualization for the People

*Michael Danziger*

An analysis of the field of information visualization focusing on the theoretical and methodological challenges associated with conceptualizing and designing visualization as a mass medium.

11:45 AM - 12:30 PM

## New Potentials for 'DIY' Music Making: Social Networks, Old and New, and the Ongoing Struggles to Reshape the Music Industry

*Evan Wendel*

An historical and comparative exploration of "independent" music scenes and their associated social networks during both the post-punk period of the late-1970s and early 1980s, as well as the current music climate which is increasingly defined by online networks. The larger contention is that the potentials for "independent" musicians to maintain viability, and even achieve success, outside of a terrain traditionally structured by the mainstream recording industry are greater today than ever before, especially when informed by an understanding of the successes and shortcomings of past practices.

12:30-1:15 PM

## Targeting Digital Youth in Web 2.0 China

*Liwen Jin*

A recent Netpop survey reports that Chinese Internet users are much more likely to use user-generated content to make purchasing

decisions than Americans (58% to 19%). They also are much more likely to participate in forum discussions and blogs. Web 2.0 technologies originate in the United States. But why does this East Asian society embrace more of the web 2.0 activities than its Western counterpart? This thesis will examine this question from societal, cultural and psychological perspectives in order to discuss new marketing strategies to target the young and dynamic population in China's cyber communities.

1:15-2:00 PM

## Lunch

2:00-2:45 PM

## Underground Tunnels, Neon Signs, and Asian-American Identity: The Many Dimensions of Visual Chinatown

*Debora Lui*

What is Chinatown? Is it an imaginary construct, a real location, or a community? Is it an ethnic enclave only available to insiders, or a fabricated environment designed specifically for tourists? This thesis attempts to reconcile the multiple ways in which Chinatowns in the U.S. are conceived, understood, and used by both insiders and outsiders of the community.

2:45-3:30 PM

## Public Interest in the Broadband Age: Media Policy for the Network Society

*Stephen Schultze*

What does "public interest" media policy mean in the broadband age? Using a three-pronged set of methods consisting of historical survey, contemporary case study, and immediate policy recommendations, this

thesis seeks to distill a unified theory of the public interest in media policy.

3:30-3:45 PM

## Coffee Break

3:45-4:30 PM

## The Modular, Mechanical and Wacky World of Slapstick: Sound/Image Relationships in the Looney Tunes

*Andres Lombana*

A comparative and multimedia analysis of the sound/image relationships developed by the Warner Brothers animation studio in its Looney Tunes series. This thesis focuses on two theatrical animated cartoons: "Porky in Wackyland" (1938) and "Dough for the Do-Do" (1948).

4:30-5:15 PM

## Tactical Cities: Negotiating Violence in Karachi

*Huma Yusuf*

This thesis uses the theories of Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau to examine how everyday practices help the residents of Karachi, Pakistan, negotiate the violence that is endemic to their city. In this construction, remembering, blogging, and navigating heavily trafficked roads become 'tactics' that create 'representational spaces' symbolically free of violence.

5:15-6:00 PM

## Reception

Please visit <http://cms.mit.edu/people> for individual profiles of the Class of 2008. PDF copies of the theses will eventually be available at <http://cms.mit.edu/research/theses.php>.

# CMS Hosts *House, M.D.*'s Katie Jacobs and Novelist Wu Ming 1

By Geoffrey Long

CMS is hosting two lectures as components of its Media Systems and Texts and Media Theories and Methods 2 courses. These lectures are closed to the public, but open to the MIT community.

The first lecture, "It's Never Lupus!: Fox's *House, M.D.* and the New Procedural Drama" will be held February 26th at 7PM in E51-325. **Katie Jacobs** is co-showrunner of the hit FBC series *House, M.D.*, nominated for two consecutive seasons for the Emmy Award for Best Drama Series. Among the show's many awards have been a Peabody Award and a Humanitas Prize. Previously, Jacobs served as co-showrunner on the critically-acclaimed ABC series *Gideon's Crossing* and the futuristic CBS legal drama *Century City*, and she produced the Emmy-nominated telefilm *A Father for Charlie*.

Jacobs made her directorial debut this past season on *House*, helming the episodes "Half-Wit" with guest star Dave Matthews as well as the season finale "Human Error". Before turning her focus to television, Jacobs produced several films, including Alan J. Pakula's thriller *Consenting Adults* and the Carl Reiner comedy *Fatal Instinct*. Jacobs is a product of the graduate film school at NYU.

The second lecture, "Slightly More Than Expected from a Band of Novelists: On How and Why a Group of Writers Called Wu Ming Set to Disrupt Italian (nay, European)



Literature and Popular Culture (and then Came to Boston to Brag About It)", will be held April 2nd at 7PM in E51-335. **Wu Ming 1** is a founding member and representative of the Wu Ming Foundation, a collective of writers from Italy. Most members of the collective were deeply involved in the Luther Blissett Project, an international experiment in culture jamming, radical pranksterism and guerrilla mythology that ran from 1994 to 1999. During that time, a group of LBP activists wrote a controversial novel titled *Q*, which was published to much acclaim in 1999. In January 2000 the authors of *Q* founded the Wu Ming Foundation, which takes its name from a Chinese word meaning either "anonymous" or "five names" depending on how the first syllable is pronounced. The name is meant both as a tribute to dissidents ("Wu Ming" is a common byline among Chinese citizens demanding democracy and freedom

of speech) and as a refusal of the celebrity-making machine which turns authors into stars.

Wu Ming's works include *54*, a novel with dozens of characters (including Cary Grant and Marshall Tito) set in 1954; the screenplay for Guido Chiesa's movie *Radio Alice* (2004); and numerous "solo" novels, including Wu Ming 1's *New Thing* (2004). They have also collaborated with musicians, actors, comic authors, playwrights, film-makers, graphic artists and academics in a plethora of multimedia and transmedia projects.

The group's most recent novel, *Manituana*, was published in Italy in March of 2007. It is the first episode of an 18th-century pan-Atlantic trilogy which will keep them writing at least until 2012. *Manituana* reached #4 in the Italian best-seller charts, and translation rights have been purchased by French and Spanish publishers. *Manituana* is also at the center of a complex transmedia project which is briefly described at <http://www.wumingfoundation.com/english/giap/giapdigest36.htm>. All of their books are freely downloadable from their website, <http://www.wumingfoundation.com>.

For more information, visit <http://cms.mit.edu/events>. The Wu Ming 1 event is funded (in part) by a Director's Grant from the Council for the Arts at MIT.

## Tenth Annual CMS Media Spectacle Returns April 28

by Generoso Fierro

An honored tradition returns on April 28th at 7PM in 32-155 when CMS presents the tenth annual Media Spectacle. The event, founded by **Chris Pomiecko**, celebrates his love for filmmaking by showcasing the finest video projects created by MIT students, staff and faculty.

Historically, the event has received submissions of every genre from experimental to documentary to narrative works created on every conceivable platform and device (mobisode anyone?). Since the dawning of YouTube and other user-generated video websites, the number of submissions has increased substantially. This endeavor has also been aided by Campus Movie Fest, a corporate-sponsored organization which invades universities internationally to teach students how to make films and supply them with the equipment to do so, all free of charge. That effort, combined with the fine video courses offered here at MIT through course 4, will certainly provide a wide array of choices to select from this year.

The event is hosted by Professor **Henry Jenkins** and judged by esteemed members of the CMS community as well as Cathy Pomiecko, the sister of the late CMS program administrator Chris Pomiecko. After all of this year's selected pieces are screened, the undergraduate winner for best film will receive a cash prize and the Chris Pomiecko Trophy followed by the Michaelangelo Antonioni Award for the best non-undergraduate entry.

Submissions will be accepted until April 10th in any format (DVD preferred) with a maximum running time of 30 minutes. We also ask if you could indicate your MIT affiliation when entering. All entries may be sent to Generoso Fierro, MIT, NE25-385, 77 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02139. Please direct any questions to [generoso@mit.edu](mailto:generoso@mit.edu).

For more information, visit <http://cms.mit.edu/events>.

# Neil Gaiman to Present Julius Schwartz Lecture May 23rd

By Geoffrey Long

Bestselling author, screenwriter and comics luminary Neil Gaiman (*Sandman*, *Beowulf*, *Stardust*) is scheduled to present the first Julius Schwartz Lecture in Kresge Auditorium at 7PM on May 23rd, 2008. The lecture series was co-founded by Comparative Media Studies and DC Comics as a memorial for longtime DC Comics editor Julius "Julie" Schwartz, who passed away on February 8, 2004. CMS was chosen as an ideal home for the lecture series due to the program's interests in popular culture and fan studies, two areas very close to Schwartz's heart.

So who was Julie Schwartz? "Schwartz was a fan, an agent, and an editor," Gaiman wrote at the time of Schwartz's passing. "Without Julie, our media landscape would look nothing like it does today. His passing really is the end of an era."

Schwartz was born in 1915, and at 17 he co-founded the first science fiction fanzine, *The Time Traveler*, with Mort Weisinger and Forrest J. Ackerman. In 1934 Schwartz and Weisinger went on to co-found the first science fiction literary agency, the Solar Sales Service, where Schwartz represented Alfred Bester, Robert Bloch, Ray Bradbury, Robert Heinlein and H.P. Lovecraft.

Schwartz helped organize the first World Science Fiction Convention in 1939, but his most famous career move came five years later in 1944, when his former client Alfred Bester helped Schwartz land a job as script editor at All-American Comics. At All-American, Schwartz edited *All-Star Comics*, *Green Lantern*, *The Flash* and *Sensation Comics* before the company was absorbed by DC Comics in 1945. Schwartz edited a range of books including *Mystery in Space*, *Strange Adventures*, *Rex the Wonder Dog*, *All-Star Western*, *Danger Trail* and *Hopalong Cassidy*, but he is best remembered for his work editing *Showcase* beginning in 1956, where Schwartz was responsible for the reinvention of the Flash, Green Lantern and the Atom. This paved the way for the Silver Age of Comics. Schwartz was also responsible for reviving the Justice Society of America and renaming it the Justice League of America in February 1960's issue of *The Brave and the Bold*; the introduction of Hawkman in February 1961's *The Brave and the Bold*; and the invention



Neil Gaiman, the author of *Sandman*, *American Gods* and *Stardust*, will present the inaugural Julius Schwartz Lecture on May 23rd.

of parallel universes and Earth-Two in September 1961's *The Flash* #123. It is also said that Schwartz was responsible for inspiring Stan Lee to revive the then-flagging Marvel Comics.

In 1964, Schwartz was put in charge of the Batman books, where he introduced the "New Look" Batman in May 1964's *Detective Comics* #327. This included the addition of the bright yellow oval behind the bat symbol and making the stories more moody and mysterious. Schwartz also helped bring Denny O'Neil and Neal Adams come to prominence, pairing them for the first time in *Detective Comics* #395 in January 1970. In that same year, Schwartz was named Editor in Chief of DC Comics.

In 1971, Schwartz also took over the Superman books. Under his direction, the stories moved away from gimmicks and more towards character-driven narratives. One of these changes found Clark Kent made into a television news reporter. He edited both the Batman and Superman books until 1978, then continued on the Superman comics almost until 1985. He would retire from editing monthly books in 1986 after a 42-year tenure at the company. His final story, the two-part "Whatever Happened to the Man of Tomorrow?" appeared in *Superman* #423 and *Action Comics* #583 and, according to a DC Comics press release, "served as a closing chapter to the Silver Age of Superman".

After his retirement Schwartz continued to be active in the community. He edited seven science fiction graphic novels for DC, including adaptations of works by Harlan Ellison, Larry Niven and Ray Bradbury. He was inducted into the Jack Kirby Hall of Fame

in 1996 and the Will Eisner Comic Book Hall of Fame in 1997, and was also the recipient of nearly every industry award, including the Forry, Shazam, Eagle, Inkpot, Alley and Jules Verne Awards. In 1998, Dragon\*Con chairman Ed Kramer established the Julie Award to recognize "universal achievement spanning multiple genres". The inaugural recipient in 1998 was Ray Bradbury, followed by Forrest Ackerman, Yoshitaka Amano, Alice Cooper, Will Eisner, Harlan Ellison, and Neil Gaiman.

When Schwartz passed away at the age of 88, he still held the title of Goodwill Ambassador and Editor Emeritus at DC Comics. In a press release about Schwartz's passing, Paul Levitz, DC's President and Publisher, wrote: "DC has lost a living legend this weekend and a true original. Julie was an editor who entertained and educated millions over three generations, performed the near-impossible feat of getting great work out of his contributors without ever ruffling their feelings, and taught many of us our craft. If the measure of an editor is the respect of his peers, he was immeasurable - for his peers who loved and respected him were often legends in their own right. Most of us were simply left in awe." Harlan Ellison said of Schwartz, "He was the turbine that drove the resurgence of comic book popularity. He saved from near-extinction one of the few truly American art-forms. He was the Simon Bolivar of his genre." In a memorial speech read by Gaiman at Schwartz' funeral, Alan Moore wrote, "We loved Julie in the way that we'd love anyone we'd known since we were small, who'd shared with us that secret, rustling, flashlight-dazzled space beneath the midnight counterpane. We loved him in the way that we loved covers with gorillas on."

For more information on the event, please visit <http://cms.mit.edu/events>. Ellison's full obituary for Schwartz can be found at <http://www.comicbookresources.com/news/newsitem.cgi?id=3414>. Moore's full essay can be found at <http://journal.neilgaiman.com/2004/03/what-alan-said-about-julie.asp>. More on Gaiman can be found at <http://www.neilgaiman.com>.



## What Happens on YouTube, Anyway?

*By Joshua Green, C3 Research Manager and Sam Ford, C3 Project Manager*

From passionate Ron Paul supporters to songs about Barack Obama, the Clintons re-enacting the *Sopranos* finale to CNN inviting debate questions, YouTube has played a particularly prominent role in 2008 U.S. Presidential Election campaigns. YouTube's rise as a prominent platform for electioneering points to the increasing significance of the site for participatory culture and subsequently as a place for exploring the attendant legal, cultural and economic implications of social media.

Despite increasing interest, there has been little large-scale qualitative inquiry into the site, the content posted to it and the uses to which it is put. One of the key projects the C3 team has undertaken this semester seeks to redress this, developing a framework for categorizing the content on YouTube and aiming, ultimately, to better understand the nature of the site itself.

Like any communication medium, understandings of YouTube are influenced by the physical nature of the service, the content which circulates via the video sharing site, the uses people make of it and the discussion that position it within society. YouTube is often described with reference to the materials posted to the site. This can result in totalizing descriptions of the service that emphasize certain genres or user behaviors. These descriptions are motivated by political desires to, for instance, deride the service as a safe harbor for copyright violation (as per Viacom and NBC's latest legal actions) or celebrate it as a democratizing force supporting a broadening of media voices. While not wholly inaccurate, such definitions are not sufficient to understand the nature of the service as a new communication medium. As seems to be the case with broadcast-oriented mediums (particularly television), YouTube itself can be characterized as a platform specifically for, or dominated by, any of these practices.

Instead, the C3 team has developed a strategy to investigate the nature of YouTube itself. Rather than merely exploring particular uses (be they performative, political or infringing), the team is looking to catalog, collate and record traces of the range of activities that take place on the platform. Working in conjunction with researchers from the Queensland University of Technology, the team has developed

a coding strategy to categorize YouTube material and has drawn together an extensive sample of the site's most popular content. The aim is to develop a picture of the range of activities that take place on the site, classifying the genres of content the medium supports and contextualizing these, and those who upload them, within the broader YouTube ecology.

The sample for the project draws together the highest-ranking videos identified in YouTube's "most discussed," "most favorited," "most popular," "most rated" and "most responded" categories. Doing so, the project collects a regularly updated snapshot of YouTube activity, organized according to some of the internal logics of the site itself. This process enables the team to not just explore the most popular videos but to start to understand the types of content that circulate within different communities of use as well. Each of these categories measures a different form of success, and exploring the content genres and producers that are popular in each will provide insights into the different ways online video is used.

Analysis of this material will enable the team to answer a range of questions about how the site functions as an exemplar for participatory culture, the relationship between professional and pro-amateur material and the aesthetic of Internet video. We are interested in understanding the predominance of particular genres of content within the online video world, the emergence of new and hybrid media forms and the characteristics of various types of "success." This research will provide insights into the way media content spreads across such a site, allowing some nuanced discussion of the potential of this platform and the uses to which it is put. Similarly, it provides data to discuss fan activity as everyday media practice. The study also provides data on new audienceship within participatory culture, that, paired with more theoretical discussions of the act of demotic and democratic media production and distribution, can provide insights into the propensities of a participatory media space.

2007 SC CNN/ YouTube Democratic Debate (Part 1)



*For more information on the Convergence Culture Consortium, visit their website at <http://www.convergenceculture.org>.*

## the education arcade

## Envisioning the Future of Educational Games

By Scot Osterweil, Education Arcade Project Manager

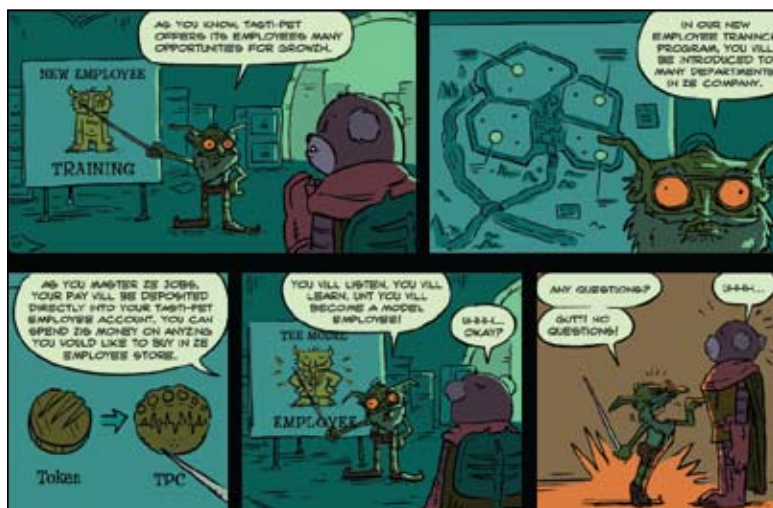
For years, meaningful discourse about learning games has been clouded by confusion over many basic questions, including:

- What forms of learning are best facilitated by games?
- How are games best adapted for use in school and/or informal learning environments?
- How do learning games relate to the larger serious games movement?
- What does the collapse of the market for CD-based learning games tell us about the medium's future?
- How should learning games adapt to the ubiquity of the Internet, and the proliferation of handheld devices such as mobile phones and iPods?
- How do learning games relate to other forms of participatory culture such as social networking, remixing, and fan fiction?

The Education Arcade has long addressed these questions through our research and through the games we have designed and prototyped. Now the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation has partnered with TEA to develop major vision papers to directly address these and other questions about learning games and their role in the future of education.

In preparation for creating these papers, TEA has hosted three symposia that brought together leaders from industry, government, media and academia to examine the future of learning games. The first two meetings, held in Boston in October and Palo Alto in December, were opportunities to discuss the state of the field in the U.S. In early January, a similar meeting was held in Shanghai. The intention of this meeting was to explore how learning games might establish a foothold in China, where currently they are not widely used. TEA ran the Shanghai meeting in partnership with Peking University and China's National Center of Educational Research.

Alex Chisholm organized these events, and with Eric Klopfer, Ravi Purushotma, and Scot Osterweil, led the discussions. Henry Jenkins provided a keynote at the Shanghai event.



These meetings have informed the three papers that TEA will be completing this Spring. Working with several co-authors, Eric and Scot will pen the overarching paper that looks broadly at the state of learning games. Alex will prepare a second paper that focuses on the business case for learning games, and on ways of creating new channels for their dissemination. Ravi will lead the writing of a paper that looks closely at

games for language learning.

This project is one element in the Hewlett Foundation's initiatives promoting open source learning and games for foreign languages, and will inform future opportunities for interactive media within the Hewlett foundation's continuing efforts to provide Open Educational Resources worldwide. Currently the Hewlett foundation plays a leading role in this space, providing sponsorship for projects such as MIT Open Courseware Initiative, The Internet Archive, The African Virtual University, Creative Commons, The CMU Open Learning Initiative, Connexions and numerous other initiatives.

## Elsewhere in TEA

As part of their work on iCue, Jason Haas and Jennifer Groff are completing a white paper for teachers who wish to utilize games and social networks in the classroom. The paper helps teachers identify obstacles to the successful adoption of technology, and provides strategies for overcoming those obstacles.

The pilot phase of the Columbus Zoo Project is wrapping up, and project manager Marleigh Norton reports that the location-based handheld game TEA prototyped will be used throughout the spring with school groups visiting the Zoo. Thanks to the project's success, the Zoo will be creating a follow-on game in consultation with TEA.

Graduate students Evan Wendel and Lan Le are designing a new online game for players ages 8 – 12. While many of the details of this game are still under wraps, we can report that it involves players with issues of medical science and philanthropy.

For more information on The Education Arcade, visit their website at <http://www.educationarcade.org>.



# GAMBIT Welcomes Doris C. Rusch and Jesper Juul

By Geoffrey Long, GAMBIT Communications Director and Clara Fernández-Vara, GAMBIT Research Associate

The Singapore-MIT GAMBIT Game Lab continues to fill out its ranks with the addition of two new game researchers, neither of whom is new to MIT.

**Doris C. Rusch** is returning to Cambridge after only a year's absence. Following a visiting scholar appointment with CMS in 2006, she returned to Austria to finish her postdoctoral work at the Institute for Design and Assessment of Technology at the Vienna University of Technology. Apart from investigating how computer games can enable an inside view on characters and events, thus enhancing tangibility and emotional depth of fictional elements in the gameplay experience, Rusch was strongly involved in establishing a transdisciplinary game studies platform in Austria by building bridges between academia and industry, organizing workshops and events, and co-founding an Austrian game studies weblog at <http://www.gamestudies.at>.

Rusch has a somewhat eclectic background, having completed studies in German Literature, Philosophy and Comparative Literature at the University of Vienna. She received her PhD at the Institute of Applied Linguistics upon completion of her research project on online journalistic arts coverage as an audio-visual event, which was funded by a two-year scholarship from the Austrian Academy of Sciences.

Her work in computer game studies is part of a larger interest in "narrative worlds" that expands over books, comics and film. Outside academia, Rusch worked many years as a film journalist for the Austrian film magazine *Celluloid* and was involved in a series of independent film productions playing women of dubious reputation and zombies.

During her time at GAMBIT, Rusch will work on her habilitation project titled *Once More with Meaning*, investigating the medium-specific characteristics of digital games and their potential to expand a game's thematic and emotional scope. "At the moment, I am most interested in game design as a metaphorical process," she says. "The most basic metaphor for fictional games is life itself, which shows in the most common metaphor for 'game over', namely 'dying'. Our conception of life is based on our direct physical experiences. We understand more abstract concepts and ideas in terms of these directly emerging concepts. Being down or raising somebody's morale are abstract ideas, understood in terms of spatial metaphors that are directly delineated from our physical being-in-the-world. Fictional games very rarely tackle abstract ideas, but for games to mature as a medium that provides deep insights into the human condition, we need to expand their thematic range and seek analogies between physical action and more abstract experiences. Spatial exploration can be just about exploring space, but exploring space could be coupled to an emotional development, such as in the metaphor 'love is a journey'. I intend to develop a systematic approach to take fictional games to a higher metaphorical level. Which is, of course, metaphorically speaking." Although Rusch's work is theory-driven, she aims at

applicability of her research to actual game design with the goal of pushing the boundaries of games as media.

CMS faculty and colleagues wondering why the name **Jesper Juul** sounds familiar may have attended his lecture on campus in late 2006, where Juul discussed the theories and arguments he presents in his book *Half-Real* (MIT Press, 2005). Juul joins GAMBIT as a video game researcher and the Program in Writing and Humanistic Studies as a lecturer after serving as an assistant professor at the Center for Computer Game Research Copenhagen, where he earned his Ph.D.

Juul has worked with video game theory since the field's early days in the late 1990s. Though originally trained in literature, he tries to consider video games in a broader perspective, also spanning psychology, computer science, and player studies. Juul works with the creation of general video game theory, but he is also interested in the intersection of video game theory and development practice. He has worked as a designer and programmer of multiplayer web-based games and, more recently, casual games. At GAMBIT, Juul will be working on a project studying how downloadable casual games, game systems like the Nintendo Wii and games like *Guitar Hero* are reaching beyond the traditional video game playing audience.

"Since there was no specialized video game audience 30 years ago, early video games were made with the assumption that the player had little advance knowledge of video games. In the last three decades, video games have acquired a large number of conventions that are part of the medium's development and relative maturity, but at the same time shut out new players who find many of today's video games incomprehensible. What we are seeing now is a return to the simplicity of early video games," Juul says. "The diverse faculty and student body at GAMBIT provides an opportunity for considering this aspect of video game history in a global perspective."

Juul's blog on video game theory, *The Ludologist*, can be found at <http://www.jesperjuul.net/ludologist> and a collection of his writings can be found at <http://www.jesperjuul.net/text>.

## GAMBIT Game a Finalist for IGF Mobile 2008

The list of finalists of the first annual Independent Games Festival Mobile competition was announced in early December, and GAMBIT's game *Backflow* was nominated for both Best Game and Innovation in Mobile Game Design. There were more than 50 entries submitted from all over the world, mostly commercial games. The winners will be announced on February 20th during the Independent Games Festival Awards Ceremony at the Game Developers Conference.

For more information on the Singapore-MIT GAMBIT Game Lab, visit their website at <http://gambit.mit.edu>.



## HyperStudio

DIGITAL HUMANITIES AT MIT

# HyperStudio Develops Resources for Exploring History and Historiography

By Whitney Trettien, HyperStudio Research Assistant

Imagine you're a free black person living in Boston, Massachusetts on April 18, 1775, the eve of the American Revolution. Although the colonists are promising to abolish slavery in the new country, your family, the Humphries, belongs to Old North Church, a loyalist congregation. Do you remain in Boston? If so, do you side with the patriots or the loyalists?

Now imagine you're a researcher visiting the Old North Church today. For an historian, the Humphries present the problem of "negative research" – that is, few or no sources exist documenting their lives. How do you understand the past without written records?

Last fall HyperStudio began collaborating with the Old North Foundation, the Massachusetts Historical and Genealogy Society, and other groups on "Tories, Timid or True Blue?", an online resource for students, teachers, researchers, as well as the general public. This project – funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities – utilizes Old North's extensive archival collection to explore pre-revolutionary Boston, historiography, and the process of mythmaking.

### "Tories, Timid or True Blue?"

Drawing on concepts from *Berliner sehen*, as well as Metamedia's *Metamedia* and *Repertoire* platforms, HyperStudio is currently developing the project's interface scenarios, as well as the structure of its digital repository. In the prototype version, the user assumes the role of a church parishioner at the start of the Revolution, investigating his or her life through primary sources, probate records, land deeds, genealogies, images and scholarship.

Without forcing the user to follow one path, the program encourages exploration, offering multiple ways of visualizing the documents. For instance, an interactive timeline shows how written records construct history, while maps of both pre-revolutionary and contemporary Boston trace the movement of people and ideas across time. Throughout the site, users will be able to call up videos of



Photographs provided by the Old North Foundation

"mentors" – for instance, an archivist, a genealogist, a professional historian – to guide them through the process of historical research, offering field-specific interpretations of the documents.

As in the *Berliner sehen*, *Metamedia* and *Repertoire* model, "Tories, Timid or True Blue?" will also allow users to comment on and save documents, creating a personal digital collection that may then be used to interpret historical

events. Using this online resource, teachers can implement specific lesson plans in which students compare their choices, methodologies and interpretations. In addition, scholars can gather, organize and annotate materials in the online collection, sharing their work with researchers around the world.

### Advancing Digital Humanities

This innovative, community-based approach to digital archiving and online education is the core concept behind HyperStudio's work with the Old North Foundation. "Tories, Timid or True Blue?" is not simply a digital database of records from Old North – although some scholars may use it that way – nor is it a passive, point-and-click slideshow of information. Rather, through decision-making modules designed to foster critical thinking, this online resource advances an exciting new model for collaborative research, and for engaging with historical documents. Making these previously inaccessible materials available to a broader audience will foster a deeper understanding not only of Old North's role in the American Revolution, but of historiography, mythmaking, and the process of (re)constructing history through written records.

For more information on HyperStudio, please visit their new website at <http://web.mit.edu/hyperstudio> or e-mail [hyperstudio@mit.edu](mailto:hyperstudio@mit.edu).



## All Together Now

*By Erin Reilly, Project New Media Literacies Project Manager*

Engaging educators and learners in today's participatory culture is the central goal of Project New Media Literacies (NML). This Fall, NML modified the current exemplar video library to reflect more strongly the theoretical framework laid out in our influential white paper, "Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century". This included tagging all the videos and learning activities to fit within the participatory culture framework centered around four Cs: how do we create, connect, communicate and collaborate.

The Exemplar Library that was once documentary videos highlighting best practices of participatory culture is now an integrated set of learning activities embedded into multimedia material. In addition to videos, the Exemplar Library now has animated data visualization, Flash movies, and other motion-based media as launching points. The learning library is a combination of analog and digital activities that teens can participate in both in and out of the classroom. This new informal approach to learning through the Exemplar Library encourages teens to move from passive viewing into interactive participation... and we saw just that in our first focus group of the semester.

Once we had a preliminary wireframe and some initial learning activities integrated into the multimedia material, we pulled together our first focus group. The focus group, five teen girls from Youth Voice Collaborative, described themselves as a group "trained to break down media and then go out into the community and make things."

The first group activity was called "Stump the Expert". This activity put their adult facilitator ("The Expert") in the position to work on his own and write down all that he knew about Caribbean culture, his own stated expertise. While Julian was making his long list, the girls collectively worked to jot anything they knew about Caribbean culture down on the board. When Julian came back into the room, he looked at the board and laughed, stating, "Wow. You guys got a lot." He then showed the girls his paper and how he'd written full sentences. He had started his list with the etymology of the word 'Caribbean'. **Lana Swartz**, an NML Research Assistant and the Focus Group Facilitator, remarked how starting out with the origin of a word was a really good example of what an expert does.

The two lists were very different and very good in different ways. The one from the girls was totally random, filled with terms that were



*NML worked with a focus group of five teen girls from the Youth Voice Collaborative to put a newly-reworked Learning Library through its paces.*

not connected to each other, while Julian's list was organized according to an expert's categories. With the two lists together, the knowledge pooled was that much greater. When the girls were asked what Collective Intelligence meant to them, one girl said, "all together" and they all agreed.

This low-tech group activity served as an introduction to the Exemplar Library. The group then searched for the term 'Collective Intelligence' and a video on Wikipedia appeared. The learning activities are

embedded into the multimedia material, and the cue-point is **Kevin Driscoll's** statement: "...And nobody owns that sand castle: you all built it together, you're all proud of it, and you all get the benefit of each others' work, so you really are relying on each other. Wikipedia is like that sand castle, except no ocean is going to wash Wikipedia away." At that point, the girls could have continued watching the video or paused and stepped into the exemplar to participate in the online activity. Stepping in, they were introduced to the Platial.com website, where collective intelligence is used to make maps. The clip provided a demonstration of how to make a map mash-up, and the girls began to create their own maps.

The girls worked in two groups of two, and one girl elected to work on her own. Interestingly, both 'working alone' and 'working in a group' had its drawbacks. For the kids who were in groups of two, one of the girls tended to do the whole computer part, (though in both groups, the other girl didn't seem to mind). The girl on her own had the drawback of not having anyone with whom to brainstorm and formulate a plan. Luckily, Julian, the adult facilitator, jumped in and played that role, which is a good example of the informal mentorship that is a key trait in participatory culture.

The girls had a great time with the activity and a picture was taken of the whole group and posted on the YVC marker on their Platial.com map. There was lots of laughing when they saw the picture. It's a fun picture. When asked if they would make these maps with their friends, they all answered with a resounding "Yes!"

*For more information on the New Media Literacies Project, visit their website at <http://www.projectnml.org>. For more on the Youth Voice Collaborative, visit <http://www.mediaminds.org>.*

## Center for Future Civic Media

## C4FCM Research Taking Form

By Geeta Dayal, C4FCM Research Associate

The Center for Future Civic Media (C4FCM), a four-year collaboration between CMS and the Media Lab funded by a \$5 million grant from the Knight Foundation, proceeds apace. By far the biggest news is the appointment of **Ellen Hume** to the post of Research Director. Hume, a respected journalist and commentator with over three decades of experience, has held posts as a national reporter at the *Los Angeles Times*, White House Correspondent at *The Wall Street Journal*, Executive Director at Harvard's Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics, and Public Policy, and Executive Director of PBS' Democracy Project. (For more on Ellen Hume, see the profile on page 2 of this issue. –Ed.)

By any measure, Hume's presence is a boon. Her depth of experience and long history of thinking about civic engagement enriches and informs the work of the student researchers at C4FCM. Hume's latest project, the New England Ethnic Newswire, is emblematic of her strong interest in local media. Her empathy, sincerity, and enthusiasm for working with each student researcher on an individual level has rapidly made her a vital core of the Center's operations.

Research at C4FCM is starting to take form in very concrete ways. The graduate students in CMS involved in the Knight project – **Abhimanyu Das**, **Huma Yusuf**, and **Colleen Kaman** – are all fleshing out their ideas after taking a breather over IAP. Das is planning a suite of open-source tools for creating webcomics; he plans to test these tools in high schools in central Pennsylvania. Yusuf and Kaman are collaborating on a project to create community radio systems, tailored for specific regions of the Dakotas, and other regions to be determined. Research Associate **Geeta Dayal** is working on developing a mobile phone platform to facilitate volunteerism in local communities, and on an ancillary project involving Wikinews. A part-time technical advisor, **Noah Blumenson-Cook**, recently joined the CMS team from the well-regarded educational software company 360 Kid in

Newton. Blumenson-Cook is assisting the CMS researchers with developing and testing their projects, and he is quickly proving himself an asset to the team.

Various projects on the Media Lab side are also reaching fruition. One of these projects is **Benjamin "Mako" Hill's** Selectricity initiative, a powerful, secure tool for setting up elections, large and small. Selectricity is already being used by non-profit organizations and other groups for their voting needs. **Nadav Aharony's** Comm.unity Platform project is a new platform implementing a wireless information system that does not require the need for any centralized administration or servers. Comm.unity is designed to work with as many devices as possible, and many different networked applications could be developed for his platform. Another project currently being developed by **Shaundra Daily** and **Karen Brennan** involves outfitting youth with various sensors to help generate dialogue about emotions in a school setting.

All student researchers involved in the Knight project have written two-page-long research proposals as a tool to both internally develop their ideas and to communicate their plans to a larger audience. In addition, the C4FCM blog (<http://civic.mit.edu>) will soon grow into a massive interactive website spanning many different areas, including a heavy emphasis on community outreach. A blog will still be a key component of this eventual website.

Also on the horizon is a major conference at the Media Lab in early June which will assemble other winners of the Knight News Challenge along with Center researchers and affiliates. The goal is that the C4FCM, as the largest single grantee of Knight funds, will function as a hub for other Knight projects nationwide.

For more information on C4FCM, please visit <http://civic.mit.edu>.

## Poem

by Nick Montfort

The stars are so big  
So shallow the street  
The moon is so small

Never touching the wall  
Walls do not meet  
The stars are so big

The elm is a twig  
One continual beat  
The moon is so small

If half were all  
Watch now, repeat  
The stars are so big

Skull is my wig  
Wheels and root feet  
The moon is so small

In the thrall  
In the retreat  
The stars are so big  
The moon is so small  
Stay as you are.

*Note:* "Poem" is an expanded villanelle. The repeating lines and the extra last line are supplied by a poem that was written, according to Marshall McLuhan's 1961 essay "The Humanities in the Electronic Age," by a second-grade student, presumably North American, in response to the launch of Sputnik:

*The stars are so big  
The moon is so small  
Stay as you are.*

This poem is quoted again in McLuhan and Quentin Fiore's *The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects*, with different punctuation and with one word changed: "The stars are so big, / The Earth is so small, / Stay as you are." A global information network informs me that the poem was also used by the English band Pram as the title of their first album.

# Faculty, Student and Alumni Updates

## Faculty

In the latter part of 2007 **Sarah Brouillette** (Literature) taught CMS.871 for the first time, wrote on contemporary literature and the creative industries for *Literature Compass*, and continued to research and think about Northern Irish cultural heritage, tourism, and region branding. The new year finds her equal parts eager and nervous to give her first keynote talk, at the Commodifying (Post-) Colonialism conference in Regensburg, Germany. There, she'll discuss British poet Daljit Nagra and his celebrated Punjabi-inflected demotic collection, *Look We Have Coming to Dover!*

**James Buzard** (Literature) recently co-edited *Victorian Prism: Refractions of the Crystal Palace* (U Virginia Press, 2007) about the cultural legacies of the Great Exhibition of 1851. This semester he is teaching a seminar on James Joyce and working on a handful of new essays. He will be lecturing at Rice U and UC Irvine this spring, Aberdeen in the summer, and keynoting at a conference in Venice in September. He has also started work on a HyperStudio project focused on serialized fiction in the Victorian period, for which he is applying for a NEH Start-Up Grant.

**Beth Coleman** (CMS, Writing) is pursuing new research this semester on locative media, with the project GeoFilms. Please look for sections of her book on virtual worlds, *Hello Avatar! A Virtual World Primer* on her site bethcoleman.org. ProjectGoodLuck, her research group blog on globalism and new media continues – young researchers get in touch! In the fall she will teach a course on globalism and media and a hands-on seminar on transmedia storytelling.

In spring 2008, **Ian Condry** (Foreign Languages and Literatures) is teaching Japanese Popular Culture and working on his book manuscript *Anime Revolution: The Making of Japan's Media Success Story*. He is also helping organize the Cool Japan research project which will bring anime scholar Tom Lamarre (McGill U) to MIT for two talks (Feb. 14-15). In April, music scholar Prof. George Yudice will be featured in the International Cultural Capital seminar series, which Ian co-organizes with Prof. **Edward Turk**.

**Thomas F. DeFrantz** (Music and Theater Arts) spent IAP in South Africa and Botswana, where he showed portions of the dance technology performance "Monk's Mood: A Performance Meditation on the Life and Music of Thelonious Monk" in Cape Town, Johannesburg, and Gaborone. MIT alum Eto Otitigbe traveled with DeFrantz to represent their research group

SLIPPAGE: Performance|Culture|Technology.

In the spring, **Kurt Fendt** (Foreign Languages and Literatures) is teaching a new upper-level German Literature course that explores the political, aesthetic, and narrative aspects of the topic of "Grenzgänge" (border walks) in texts from the 20th century up to

the most recent post-unification texts. For the fourth year in row, he's organizing the European Short Film Festival at MIT (April 11-13, 2008) with **Karen Verschooren**, Project Manager in the HyperStudio, and **Generoso Fierro** in CMS as co-organizers. In May, he's convening the first Digital Humanities Workshop at MIT, bringing together humanists at MIT and outside experts such as Lev Manovich to explore the potential of this emerging field for MIT.

This Spring **Stefan Helmreich** (Anthropology) is teaching a new course cross-listed with CMS, *Anthropology of Sound*. The course examines the ways humans experience the realm of sound and how perceptions and technologies of sound emerge from cultural, economic, and historical worlds. In addition to learning about how environmental, linguistic, and musical sounds are construed cross-culturally, students will learn about the rise of telephony, architectural acoustics, and sound recording, as well as about the globalized travel of these technologies. He also recently published "An Anthropologist Underwater: Immersive Sound-scapes, Submarine Cyborgs, and Transductive Ethnography" in *American Ethnologist*, which describes the sound of his recent dive to the bottom of the Pacific in the Woods Hole submarine *Alvin*.

The new edited collection from **Diana Henderson** (Literature), *Alternative Shakespeares 3*, was recently published by Routledge and includes her interview with Royal Shakespeare Company Artistic Director Michael Boyd as well as her article on "Alternative Collaborations: Shakespeare, Nahum Tate, Our Academy and the Science of Probability." She served as a panelist for the Actors' Shakespeare Project's *Henry V* conversation, "What is a Just War?" and has been providing dramaturgical support for director Daniel Kramer's Warsaw production of "Young Hamlet." She is team-teaching with **Janet Sonenberg** this spring, and continues her work as Dean for Curriculum and Faculty Support.



**Jay Scheib** premiered his new theatrical work *This Place is a Desert* on January 9th at the *Under the Radar* Festival in NYC.

Photo by Hayden Taylor





President of Kainan University An-Pang Kao and Professor David Thorburn shake hands at a signing ceremony in Taiwan extending the Communications Forum/CMS-Kainan University Exchange Program through 2015.

**Henry Jenkins** (CMS, Literature) closed off 2007 by participating in a panel about youth and digital learning at Boston's Brattle Theater, hosted by the MacArthur Foundation. Fellow panelists included Howard Gardner (Harvard) and Katie Salens (Parsons). He spent January on a lecture tour which took him to Shanghai, Toronto, Saint Louis, and San Antonio. His plans for the coming term include giving the opening remarks at the South by Southwest conference in Austin, Texas and speaking at the Do-It-Yourself Media conference at the University of Southern California.

**Wyn Kelley** (Literature) recently co-edited a volume of essays, *"Whole Oceans Away": Melville and the Pacific*, with Jill Barnum and Christopher Sten for Kent State University Press. A second new book, *Herman Melville: An Introduction*, came out from Blackwell Publishing in January 2008.

**Marty Marks'** (Music and Theater Arts) third set of DVDs, *Treasures III: Social Issues in American Film, 1900-1934*, for which he served as principal composer and music curator (National Film Preservation Foundation, 2007), was released in October 2007. By the

end of the year it had made it onto three lists of top ten DVD sets of the year: *The New York Times*, *Time Magazine*, and *The New Yorker*. In February and March of this year he will be performing for two evenings of Russian films at the Harvard Film Archive, in conjunction with a series presented by Russian film specialist Yuri Tsivian. The first, on Feb. 25, will be two rarely seen films of Yevgeni Bauer: *Child of the Big City* and *Daydreams*. On the following Monday (March 3), he will play for Eisenstein's *Strike* and Vertov's *Kino Eye*.

**Nick Montfort** (CMS, Writing and Humanistic Studies) hosted a series of digital writing presentations, Purple Blurb, which will continue in the Spring. He met his fellow Grand Text Auto bloggers at UC Irvine for the opening of their group art exhibit and also traveled to the Classic Gaming Expo, where he and co-author Ian Bogost continued to research and write *Video Computer System: The Atari 2600 Platform*. That book has now been accepted by the MIT Press.

**Douglas Morgenstern** (Foreign Languages and Literatures) and Margarita Ribas Groeger, Director of the Spanish Language Program, are developing a new online

multimedia interchange with colleagues at Dartmouth and Harvard. The project, entitled LanguageSpace, derives from earlier student-centered multimedia efforts used in their current classes, the MITUPV Exchange (<http://mitupv.mit.edu>) and España Hoy (<https://web.mit.edu/espanahoy>). LanguageSpace, housed at Dartmouth, will employ social networking structures, including blogs and podcasts, to permit text-, photo- and video-based exchanges by students with their counterparts in universities in Mexico and Spain. Funded by the Consortium for Language Teaching and Learning (<http://languageconsortium.org>) the goal is to create a model of a multifaceted Web 2.0 learning community applicable to numerous languages.

**Jeff Ravel** (History) has joined forces with **Kurt Fendt** and the HyperStudio team to launch the Comédie-Française Registers Project (CFRP) in conjunction with the Library-Museum of the Comédie-Française in Paris, the University of Paris – X, and Oxford Brookes University. The project will create advanced tools for researching and visualizing the complete records of the registers of the Comédie Française acting



company (1680-1800). When complete, CFRP will allow researchers to investigate 17th and 18th century French theatre repertoires and audiences.

**Jay Scheib** (Music and Theater Arts) premiered his new theatrical work, *This Place is a Desert*, at the Under the Radar Festival in New York City on January 9th, 2008. The work was conceived and directed by Scheib in collaboration with media designer Leah Gelpe and produced by Shoshana Polanco, and included performances by Caleb Hammond, Sarita Choudhury, Thomas Keating, Aimee Phelan-Deconinck, Jorge Rubio, April Sweeney, Eric Dean Scott, and Tanya Selvaratnam. The play is a motion portrait parody of human loves and human emotion increasingly diminished. The action is presented in fragments – through windows, reflected in mirrors, through partially-drawn curtains and projected live onto a wide screen looming above the stage architecture. A lone cinematographer careens through the wreckage of bankers and writers, nuclear disasters and nuclear engineers – all of them accidents that might better have been avoided. Partially seen and partially screened, four lovers demolish each other in an attempt to defy their irreparable loneliness. More information on the work can be found at <http://www.jayscheib.com/desert>.

The MIT Press inaugurated “The Irving Singer Library” in March 2008 with reprints of the three volumes of **Irving Singer’s** (Linguistics and Philosophy) trilogy *The Nature of Love*, for each volume of which he has written new prefaces. Also in March his lecture on and reading from his book *Ingmar Bergman, Cinematic Philosopher* became available electronically on MITWORLD. In April 2008 the MIT Press will publish a new book of his entitled *Philosophy of Love: A Partial Summing-Up*, and early in the fall it will publish his newest book on film, this one entitled *Cinematic Mythmaking: Philosophy in Film*. During IAP Irving’s work in progress now tentatively entitled *Modes of Creativity* went through another draft of the eight chapters he has written thus far.

**David Thorburn**, Professor of Literature and CMS and Director of the MIT Communications Forum, recently returned from Taiwan where he signed an agreement

extending through 2015 the CMS/ Communications Forum Exchange Program with Kainan University. This project provides funding for the Communications Forum and supports Special Students and Visiting Scholars from Taiwan, who attend MIT for a semester and participate in CMS activities. The collaboration also supports a biannual conference in Taiwan at which research teams from CMS and other MIT programs discuss and demonstrate their work.

Spring semester sees **William Uricchio** (CMS, Literature) back in Cambridge after a research stay in the Netherlands and lectures throughout Europe. Later this semester, he’ll be chairing a workshop on ‘the future of television’ at the annual Society for Cinema and Media Studies conference; addressing the Royal Dutch Academy of Sciences on literacies in the current media environment; and giving keynotes at conferences in Budapest (on the deep history of digitalization), Lausanne (on the notion of the *dispositif* in late 19th century media), and Cologne (on Europe as an accreted space of archives and identities). He’ll also join the board of the MIT Press and explore the future of publishing, MIT-style.

**Andrea Walsh** (Writing and Humanistic Studies) is currently researching the culture of the antebellum women’s rights movement in America. She recently published an article entitled “Everyday Justice: Teaching About Antebellum Women’s Rights Activism in America.” During the Spring term she will be teaching SP. 401, *Introduction to Women’s and Gender Studies* and 21W.730: *Writing About Contemporary Issues*. During the summer she will be a core faculty member in the “Pursuing Justice” Summer Institute, a Teaching American History grant program for public school teachers grades 7-12.

The new book by **Jing Wang** (Foreign Languages and Literatures), *Brand New China: Advertising, Media, and Commercial Culture* from Harvard University Press came out on January 15. She was in Hong Kong in December 17 and 18 to kick off a conference on “IT and Social Responsibilities,” an event co-sponsored by the School of Communication and Journalism, MIT’s Critical Policy Studies of China, and Creative Commons China Mainland. She gave a paper “Creative Commons for the Socially Marginalized?”

Model Building for a Developing Country.” She is currently helping CC China develop an infrastructure in rural China through an NGO China project.

**Christopher Weaver** has been busy consulting and is currently helping Blockbuster plan its digital transition as well as assisting XO Communications in hardening its metro fiber network. Over the past year he participated in the creation of the new Principles of Engineering Practice course (3.003) that mixes engineering and technology history to provide future engineers a better perspective of the social effect of their work. Among the multiple disciplines being taught in the first class this Spring, CMS is well represented as both Chris and **William Uricchio** will participate. Chris will return to teach his Media Industries and Systems course (CMS.610) next Spring.

## Graduate Students

This Spring **Mike Danziger** ’08 is continuing work on his thesis, “Information Visualization for the People,” and fantasizing about jobs that don’t yet exist. He is also really down with “blogging.”

**Abhimanyu Das** ’09 spent his fall semester reading more Indian comics than can be good for anyone, taking his first steps towards delving into his research on the production models of Indian comic books. Other highlights included pretending to be David Lynch while pointing a camera at Lana’s dog eating *The Diaries of Laura Palmer*, trying to figure out a way to include Mary Worth in all his presentations (despite hating her) and finally finishing *Don Quixote*. Over the spring, he hopes to get his webcomics project for the MIT Center for Future Civic Media off the ground, finish *all* (or at least a majority) of his assigned readings and finally complete playing *Bioshock*.

For his update, **Josh Diaz** ’09 writes: “I’ve been involved with a group of game scholars discussing moral and ethical challenges in games, researching the frameworks of how gaming literacy emerges in independently-produced games like *Knytt Stories* and *Dwarf Fortress* and the surrounding communities, and working hard in GAMBIT creating prototypes in a variety of game development

platforms. I've also delved deep into some of the early works of Grant Morrison, just for the thrill of it, alongside developing a healthy appreciation for Japanese actor Oguri Shun. I'm looking forward to trying out some more advanced iterative design methods for game production, working on getting some blogwork up and running, and creating my first publicly-available game for GAMBIT by the end of IAP. I also hope to branch out into studying some of the newer trends in global music culture (like 'shantyhouse'), because it's not all fun and games, at least not literally!"

**Kevin Driscoll '09** finished up his first term in CMS by writing about the folk practices and issues of identity found in contemporary hip-hop mixtapes and Crank Dat music videos. In the fall term he also helped found the MIT chapter of Students for Free Culture and is contributing to a software toolkit for tracking videos on YouTube. During the holiday break, he spent time with a 9th grade history class in Cambridge to document their exceptional work on the Haitian Revolution. This material will serve as a model for future open education efforts in which students operate the video camera and document their own classes.

**Liwen Jin '08** celebrated the New Year with her friends in Boston by playing games, cooking Chinese food, and watching the New Year fireworks downtown. She spent her winter break writing her thesis about Chinese cyberspace and working on the Beijing Film Academy project with the HyperStudio. Liwen is particularly interested in this year's American Presidential election. Though she cannot vote, she is for Obama because she, like a lot of American youths, hopes America could get some "changes" in the future. She is also paying close attention to the 2008 Beijing Olympics, and she hopes to get involved with it in some way. Liwen also produced a video featuring MIT Chinese students for the MIT Chinese Students and Scholars Association, which was shown on February 2nd at MIT's

Kresge Auditorium for the celebration of New Year for all Boston-area Chinese.

**Colleen Kaman '09** completed her first semester by writing about the relationship between political action and consumerism and responses to the threat of climate change. She designed a mobile social networking eco-game that encourages active learning. She also focused on issues of civic engagement, activism, and the production of authenticity in journalism and other media. Over IAP, in addition to following the Presidential primaries, she brushed up on her ethnographic techniques and made a short film.



**Kevin Driscoll '09** spent part of his fall semester hanging with Master Chief at the E for All Expo in Los Angeles.

Photograph by Master Chief's Dad, CC-BY-SA:  
<http://flickr.com/photos/believekevin/1692582935/>

In the fall semester **Ana Domb Krauskopf '09** worked with C3 and is still immersed in the "Uses of YouTube" project and a paper on viral distribution. She started research on the concept of world music, and the production, distribution and consumption implications of the term. Ana still intends to focus her work on alternative distribution models and identity construction processes. During the Fall, she got excited about more ideas than she could actually execute, and by the end of the term realized that she needs to improve her time-management skills.

**Lan Xuan Le '09** had a productive and enjoyable first semester at CMS and is now very glad she decided not to go to medical school after all. She continued studying the aesthetics and reception of anime with both Professors Jenkins and Thorburn this semester, examining the global popularity of the *Naruto* franchise. Lan is also learning a lot about game design at the Education Arcade and looks forward to working on *Labyrinth* and *Caduceus* this spring. In non-CMS related news, Lan presented a talk at the 135th Annual American Public Health Association meeting in Washington DC this November on the potential role of media technology in battling childhood obesity.

This spring, Lan looks forward to introducing her classmates to the world of Japanese television dramas and knitting some more sweaters.

**Xiaochang Li '09** spent much of her first semester grumbling about the state of fanfiction communities and writing about the participatory poetics of viral video ad campaigns and the cross-dressing shōjo in a Japanese kids show about a high school host club. Many hours were also spent learning the joys and heartaches of Interactive Fiction, and she hopes to finish the Fanvid That Won't End over IAP. Finally, she is learning the true meaning of teaminess while watching approximately 32093249302492 (scientific estimate) YouTube videos made by affection-starved teenagers the world over and a woman who likes to define words "sexily." She

also now gets Soulja Boy fanmail.

**Andres Lombana '08** continues working on his thesis research on slapstick, animation and sound effects. This spring he will develop learning activities and edit the Video Games exemplar for the New Media Literacies Project.

**Debora Lui '08** had a busy fall semester, taking classes in urban studies and film in order to support her thesis work on cinematic representations of Chinatowns. After a short

break in New York, Debora began work again on her thesis as well on the New Media Literacies Teachers Guide, which focuses on teaching classic literature through the new participatory culture framework.

**Jason Rockwood** '09 writes: "MIT has a reputation for teaching students how to think, and CMS has proven to be no exception. My critical, creative, and theoretical thinking skills have been sharpened by the educational expertise of Nick, Henry, and David. Likewise, my classmates have continually impressed me with the range and depth of their personal and professional interests. We've formed a tight bond, alternately supporting and challenging one another as the situation requires. My own research has proceeded in fits and stops, but for the last two months I've been studying social networks and fan cultures around political candidate Ron Paul, whose likeness I had tattooed on my chest. KIDDING!"

**Talieh Rohani** '09 will be shooting a Fanvid documentary with Francesca Coppa and Laura Shapiro. The NML team will collaborate with Francesca and Laura to interview fanvidders in the DIY Conference in LA. The team later will send a camcorder to different fanvidders to create their own clips to embed in the documentary. The project is initiated by **Henry Jenkins** and aims to make two-video chapters along with learning activities for New Media Literacies Project. Talieh is also teaching a course in the Edgerton Center at MIT during the Spring semester. The course teaches the students film craft through creating a video that promotes a non-profit. The students will have hands on exercises in filmmaking while becoming involved in the local art scene. More information about the course can be found at <http://web.mit.edu/Edgerton/www/Courses.html>.

**Steve Schultze** '08 finished his CMS coursework this fall, rounding it off with an intellectual property course at Harvard Law. He will finish his thesis this spring, with a focus on communications policy and the public interest. He continues to coordinate the local contingent of the Yale-Harvard-MIT Cyber Scholars working group.

After an exciting and hectic first semester, **Lauren Silberman** '09 fondly recalls making a video game, book, and music video as

part of **Nick Montfort**'s media production class, the enthusiasm **Henry Jenkins** had when lecturing about Japanese Cosplay, the important life lesson **David Thorburn** taught her on the basketball court – *never* doubt your elders – and the many engaging discussions and industry insights **Alex Chisholm** and **Stacey Lynn Schulman** offered in their television ecosystem class. Over IAP Lauren spent time with her family on the island of St. Kitts and volunteered at the Jimmy Fund Council of Greater Boston New Stars for Young Stars event on January 12.

**Lana Swartz** '09 is all about ethnography and economics right now. Who would have thought? The first semester was exciting. She and **Ahbi Das** worked on a short film involving a chihuahua named (really) Agent Dale Cooper and a copy of *The Secret Diary of Laura Palmer* that had been smeared with chicken. She helped introduce her classmates to the joys of *Mary Worth* comics. She got to interview one of her favorite fashion bloggers. She learned the true meaning of "thick description" and close reading from **David Thorburn**. She spent her IAP in **Grant McCracken**'s workshop. Nevertheless, she was happy to spend her winter break on a Great American Road Trip from Houston to Los Angeles. She was unfortunately not able to read novels nor get sun as planned.

**Whitney Trettien** '09 spent her fall semester reading and writing about *Bleak House* in 1/6th of the time it took Dickens to serially publish it, learning the joys of interactive fiction, and using meetings with the Old North Foundation as an excuse to chow canolis from Mike's Pastries. After two weeks of rustication in January, she returned to her work for HyperStudio, in addition to organizing a book tour for an anthology of peace activism she recently edited, *Cost of Freedom*, now out on Howling Dog Press.

During the fall semester **Evan Wendel** '08 continued his thesis research which has developed into an historical exploration of music social networks, old and new, and the "independent" music making practices within them. He is looking at the oppositional practices of many early post-punk labels, like Rough Trade records, and tracing the influence and relevance these past music networks and practices exhibit in the context

of online social networks today, particularly MySpace Music and Last-FM. To preserve his sanity, Evan also spent a fair amount time in Rochester, New York visiting his fiancée and two cats.

After a fall term spent flitting between different social theorists, **Huma Yusef** '08 decided the best way to get on with her thesis was to head to Karachi, photograph some torched vehicles, and do ethnographic research. She will compile this research in a project examining how nostalgia, traffic jams, and blogging help Karachiites negotiate the violence endemic to their city. Meanwhile, through the C4FCM, she will try to implement an audio-based, interactive, information dissemination platform in one of Boston's ethnic communities.

## Alumni

**Ivan Askwith**, SM '07, is now a Creative Strategist at Big Spaceship, where he coordinates transmedia campaigns for the company's television and film clients. His current projects include the upcoming James Bond film, *Quantum of Solace*, as well as new television series for cable networks including A&E and USA. In the fall, Ivan presented to the Producers' Guild of America on transmedia storytelling and will be a visiting lecturer on the topic at NYU this spring. In addition, he continues to write occasional articles on digital media for *Slate* and has recently completed a chapter on narrative premeditation and audience expectations in the ABC drama *Lost* to be published in 2008.

**Vanessa Bertozzi**, SM '06, continues to work at Etsy.com, where she runs the online magazine. Her and her filmmaking collaborators' short film *Pepe (Secondhand)* screened at Slamdance Film Festival and is airing on Current TV. She just got engaged to artist Mickey Duzyj, whom she met through Project NML while in grad school.

**Jim Bizzocchi**, SM '01, is an Assistant Professor in the School of Interactive Arts and Technology at Simon Fraser University. He continues to do research in three areas: interactive narrative, game design, and the future of the televisual. Jim has a research semester starting this coming January. He will use this time to finish the post-



production on *Cycle* (the fourth work in his "Ambient Video" series). He has forthcoming papers in the journal *Fibreculture* and in the *International Journal of Computational Science* (special issue on Computational Art). He also has a chapter in the new book *Small Tech: The Culture of Digital Tools* (University of Minnesota Press, 2008). He has recently presented papers at the Digital Arts and Culture conference and the International Digital Media and Art Association. He will be presenting at the upcoming conference of the Society for Cinema and Media Studies. More about Jim can be found on his site at [www.dadaprocessing.com](http://www.dadaprocessing.com).

**Nadya Direkova**, SM '03, is working as a game designer at Backbone Entertainment. She's collaborating with her Backbone team to design an innovative educational game, which will be announced in 2008.

**Clara Fernández-Vara**, SM '04, is somehow managing to work on her dissertation while working full-time as a research associate in GAMBIT – this term she will become a PhD candidate officially. She saw her first two articles in print last fall, as part of two different edited books: 'Evolution of Spatial Configurations in Videogames' in *Words In Play: International Perspectives on Digital Games Research* (Suzanne de Castell & Jennifer Jenson, editors) and 'Labyrinth and Maze: Videogame Navigation Challenges' (plus a short spatial analysis of the game *Worms*) in *Space Time Play: Computer Games, Architecture and Urbanism: The Next Level* (Friedrich von Borries, Steffen P. Walz & Matthias Böttger, editors). She has been working on the design of the videogame-related curriculum cluster at MIT, and will be co-teaching CMS.608 Game Design course (and learning a lot in the process). She expects to beat the cold Bostonian winter with home-made churros (deep fried dough sticks) and hot chocolate.

**Sam Ford**, SM '07, continues to work as project manager for the MIT Convergence Culture Consortium and is teaching a CMS class this spring on American soap operas. He has had presentations of his thesis work, entitled "As the World Turns in a Convergence Culture," accepted for the Society for Cinema and Media Studies, the Popular Culture Association, and Console-ing Passions. He is also planning to

speak about the Consortium's work at Western Kentucky University in the spring. Ford has been interviewed or featured recently in *ESPN: The Magazine*, Belgium's *De Morgen*, *CBS Soaps In Depth*, *Soaps.com*, *The Boston Globe*, and the ECW Press book, *Benoit*. He recently co-authored a year-in-review on Web 2.0 for *The Christian Science Monitor*. Ford is currently working on revisions for an essay for *Popular Communication* and an essay on *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report* which will appear in *The Cult Television Reader*.



### CMS Babies: Itamar Seymour Fox

CMS is thrilled to announce the arrival of Itamar Seymour Fox, son of Danny Fox and Orit Kuritsky. Itamar was born on January 2, 2008 at 10:19 PM, weighing in at 3070 grams (6 pounds, 12 ounces). Itamar is reportedly very, very sweet; the rest of the family is reportedly elated but quite exhausted.

**Sarah Kamal**, SM '05, conducted her third and (she believes) final Ph.D field trip to Afghanistan in October, in what was perhaps the most difficult trip she has ever had to make security-wise. She presented a paper on gender and media development in Afghanistan at the Middle East Studies Association annual conference in November, became a Daily Brief contributor for *Oxford Analytica* in December, and is now in a dark cave working on preparing three draft chapters of her dissertation for her Ph.D upgrade viva at the LSE.

**Geoffrey Long**, SM '07, spent the Fall semester and IAP doing his best Wally West imitation. In addition to TAing Ed Barrett's Interactive Narrative class, he lectured on transmedia storytelling at the 2007 FuturePlay conference

in Toronto and at the 2008 CMS-Sony Game Workshop (where we also served as a judge), attended the 2007 Festival of Cartoon Art at Ohio State University, launched an irregular column called 'Divergences' in the *C3 Weekly Update*, served as product owner for two web-based games at the Singapore-MIT GAMBIT Game Lab, designed a new logo for Project New Media Literacies (see page 20) and grudgingly turned 30. He is currently looking forward to attending the 2008 Game Developers Conference in San Francisco, where he hopes to enjoy a reunion with both old CMS friends and the sun.

**Susannah Mandel**, SM '03, is currently living in Philadelphia, where she plans to remain for the immediate future. On a recent visit to Boston, she was delighted to visit the new CMS and GAMBIT spaces, and to catch up with **Clara Fernández-Vara**, **Matthew Weise**, and **Philip Tan** and his wife Jen, as well as **Anita Chan** and, of course, **Henry Jenkins**. Susannah is happily spending a lot of time reading, writing, and looking at things. She writes a bimonthly column for the Web magazine *Strange Horizons* about fantastic and classical literature; an essay, "Apples," also appeared in the anthology *Evocative Objects: Things We Think With*, edited by Prof. Sherry Turkle, which was published this fall by the MIT Press. Susannah would also like to mention, particularly for the benefit of her '03 classmate **Zhan Li**, that she has finally gotten her driver's license.

**Peter Rauch**, SM '07, is anticipating his first print publication in Fall 2008 in *The Legend of Zelda and Philosophy*. He co-authored the article in question with fellow CMS alum **Kristina Drzaic**, SM '07. He has several other projects in the works, with varying stages of development.

For her update, **Karen Schrier**, SM '05, writes: "Last week I changed jobs, moving over to Scholastic, where I am the senior producer at the Lab for Informal Learning, a division focused on the research and product ideation of games, digital media and out-of-school learning. We are creating some new transmedia properties such as *The 39 Clues* (<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/18/books/18scho.html>). Otherwise, I'm still living in NYC and still a part-time doctoral



student at Columbia University. A few months ago, I organized a games and learning event through Columbia's LearnPlay and the IGDA (International Game Developers Association), which you can watch at [http://www.youtube.com/view\\_play\\_list?p=77B70E50BFC0A98C](http://www.youtube.com/view_play_list?p=77B70E50BFC0A98C). I have an excerpt in the recently published *Space/Time/Play* (<http://www.spacetimeplay.org/>), a book that also features a contribution by **Henry Jenkins**. My boyfriend and I developed a new mobile game, *Priced Out*, that will be entered in the 2008 Come Out and Play festival (<http://www.comeoutandplay.org/>). We also presented on *Priced Out* and playtesting at an IGDA meeting last month. Then in the Spring, I'll be presenting research on YouTube, media literacy, and video game usability at two different conferences, AERA (<http://www.aera.net/>) and SITE (<http://site.aace.org/conf/>). I hope to see some fellow CMSers at GDC 2008!"

During the Fall semester **Parmesh Shahani**, SM '05, continued his work on innovation at the Mahindra corporation in India. This included investing as a venture capitalist in the Cambridge, Massachusetts-based LocaModa (<http://locamoda.com/>) which

enables interactivity between mobiles and out of home networks via the web, and helping organize the Mahindra Indo American Arts Council Film Festival in New York, an annual event that brings together the best of South Asian independent and diasporic cinema. While his Bollywood-style corporate film for his department at Mahindra didn't win him the first prize at the annual company retreat, at least he got to visit Kuala Lumpur because of it. ("Cute city," he says.) He travelled to Tokyo to ring in 2008 with his partner Junri. Their Skype-facilitated long-distance relationship is going strong, although the daily meal together on video chat is proving to be a little hard to achieve. And oh, how could we forget, he partied with MIT president **Susan Hockfield** and her entourage in Bombay on their recent India trip.

**Philip Tan**, SM '03, is still dealing with airflow weirdness as Executive Director of the Singapore-MIT GAMBIT Game Lab, and has recently joined the rapidly-growing class of red-ringed Xbox 360 owners. He notes that his PS3 controller died after just a few months of use, and one makes a perfectly adequate replacement for the other when it comes to

additional space heating for winter, though nothing beats a toasty first-generation Intel MacBook Pro on your lap.

**Matthew Weise**, SM '04, has not been getting enough sleep lately. He also hasn't been eating out like he used to, and tends to cook more at home nowadays. Brushing habits are pretty good. Flossing needs improvement. Matt is currently 30 hours into *Mass Effect* and plans to finish it someday. He has 156 stars in *Mario Galaxy* and is at the last level of *Resident Evil Umbrella Chronicles*. Matt saw *Twin Peaks* for the first time recently and thinks it is cool, but he is a David Lynch fan anyway so it was bound to happen. Matt's action figure collection is improving, though it still pales in comparison to Philip's and Rik's. Sometimes he thinks he is simply outclassed in geekery by his GAMBIT workmates, but he still tries. Matt is creative director for the *gunPLAY* project and has actually been getting a lot of writing done.

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*Please direct all alumni updates to CMS Communications Director Geoffrey Long at [glong@mit.edu](mailto:glong@mit.edu).*

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## Gupta Deep Dives into Real-World CMS

(continued from back cover)

media, Neeti identifies and sustains user communities both online and offline. To track community activities and their key challenges for Unified Communications' online audience, Neeti regularly analyzes blogs, newsgroups, and online forums. Findings from these resources and the deep dives are used to define marketing strategies for the next wave of Unified Communications products as well as generate tactical customer engagement programs.

"CMS provided me with frameworks with which to think about new media and communities," Neeti says. "The comparative media concentration in particular – with its focus on melding creative and technological aspects in the creation of immersive digital experiences – presented an exciting opportunity to gain a broader understanding of research methods and to advance my skills as a researcher and designer." Neeti also credits CMS with endowing her with the skills needed to simplify and synthesize complex information with clarity and recognize patterns, abilities that are integral in the workplace. "I learned how to use storytelling as a way of thinking at CMS and have been applying it to my work ever since," she explains. Moreover, Neeti believes that working on industry-related research assistantships, completing cross-discipline projects, and participating in design competitions over IAP prepped her for the collaborative work environment at Microsoft.

Having internalized the spirit of a truly interdisciplinary graduate program, Neeti still manages to juggle different activities in her spare time. She travels in the quest of World Heritage sites and in the last four years has touched down at Mayan ruins in Mexico, eighteenth-century castles along the River Rhine, and major cities across Europe, Australia, Canada, and India. While family, friends, and hobbies such as gardening and cooking keep her busy, Neeti has also made time to work on a new project called Greenseeds, a grassroots organization aimed at raising awareness of social and environmental issues amongst indigenous populations in developing countries. Greenseeds' mandate calls for engaging children in the issues that impact their environment and lives by empowering their creativity. To that end, Neeti and her colleagues design toolkits for children that encourage 'learning by doing' and 'participatory design' to foster creative problem solving. The toolkits will be used by schools and non-profit organizations in developing countries. From design to development, Neeti has done it all in true CMS fashion.

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*Neeti invites fellow CMS alumni and affiliates to meet her on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=547883760&hiq=gupta%2Cneeti>.*

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# CMS Makes Headlines around the Globe

## CMS Undergraduate Major One Step Closer to Permanence

On January 15, 2008 the Committee on Curricula voted unanimously to recommend that CMS be approved as an official undergraduate degree program. The undergraduate major was launched in 2003 as a five-year experiment by the Committee on the Undergraduate Program, which conducted a formal review in the spring of 2007 and voted unanimously to endorse the program last fall. The COC approval represents the halfway point in the process. The Faculty Policy Committee is next in line, and if their approval is given, the undergraduate major will be put to a final vote at an Institute faculty meeting in March or April.

## Jenkins, Johnson and McGonigal among Keynote Speakers at SXSWi 2008

This year's SXSW Interactive conference in Austin, Texas will play host to a number of friends of the CMS department. CMS co-director **Henry Jenkins** and author and occasional colloquium lecturer **Steven Berlin Johnson** (*Everything Bad is Good for You*) will be delivering the opening remarks on Saturday, March 8th. ARG researcher/creator **Jane McGonigal** (*ilovebees*, *World Without Oil*) will be delivering a keynote address on Tuesday, March 11.

## Convergence Culture Consortium Makes Headlines from Boston to Brazil

The Fall semester found C3 garnering column inches in publications around the world. The Brazilian magazine *Meio & Mensagem* featured November's Futures of Entertainment 2 Conference in "O Futuro do Entretenimento" by Mauricio Mota. C3 Project Manager **Sam Ford** co-authored a December piece on "What Businesses Learned in 2007 about the Digital Race" for *The Christian Science Monitor*, and his MIT class on soap operas was recently profiled in *CBS Soaps in Depth* and on Soaps.com and Soapdom.com. C3 graduate student researcher **Xiaochang Li** was interviewed in November by CBC Radio's *Spark* about her research on Soulja Boy, and her research on the rapper was featured in the Columbia, S.C., *Free Times* in January as well. Ford was also interviewed in August for

*The Boston Globe* regarding his research on pro wrestling (in an article on the career of Brutus "The Barber" Beefcake), as well as for an article in Benoit, discussing how the media dealt with coverage of wrestler Chris Benoit's murders and suicide last summer. Ford also appeared in a September edition of *ESPN Magazine* (discussing how media constructs news narratives) and a December edition of *De Morgen*, a leading Dutch-language newspaper in Belgium (discussing the launch of the Amazon Kindle).

## Jenkins Keynotes 2007 Conference of the Association of Internet Researchers, Visits Simon Fraser University

On Friday October 19th **Henry Jenkins** delivered a keynote address at the 2007 Conference of the Association of Internet Researchers in Vancouver, where he spoke on the topic of convergence and participatory culture. After his keynote, he addressed the graduate students of Simon Fraser University's School of Interactive Arts and Technology with a lecture entitled "Retrofuturism in Comics and Contemporary Culture". CMS alumnus **Jim Bizzocchi** SM '01 attended the keynote at the AoIR conference and was Henry's host at the SFU event, where Henry was presented the coveted "Os-Cat" Award for Excellence in Seussian Studies.

## HyperStudio's Iraq: The Human Cost Project in MIT News

The MIT news office recently profiled *Iraq: The Human Cost*, a new online project by the Center for International Studies that was designed by the HyperStudio. The site aims to provide insight into the costs and causes of violence in the Middle Eastern region, including accurate depictions of current Iraqi living conditions and the number of civilian injuries and deaths associated with the conflict. "The long-term prospects for Iraq are pretty bleak, but it won't necessarily become a failed state," CIS executive director **John Tirman** says in the article. "Because of its oil, the role of outsiders is and will be very potent, and I argue that many Americans, given full information, would support better policies in the future than the ones that got us here."

## Project NML in the Press

Project NML's meeting with the Digital Media Youth Advisory was recently featured on the Global Kids' Digital Media Initiative weblog ([http://www.holymeatballs.org/2008/01/dmya\\_advisory\\_meets\\_with\\_proje.html](http://www.holymeatballs.org/2008/01/dmya_advisory_meets_with_proje.html)). Forthcoming articles about NML include "What Wikipedia Can Teach Us About New Media Literacies" in the next issue of *Journal of Media Literacy*, which represents **Henry Jenkins'** keynote address at the National Alliance for Media Literacy Conference in St. Louis in the summer of 2007; a publication for *Children, Youth, and Environments: Children in Technological Environments* due in mid-June 2008 co-authored by **Erin Reilly** and **Kelly Leahy**; and an article in the February 2008 *Youth Media Reporter* co-authored by Reilly and **Alice Robison**. Robison also continues to publish in the areas of literacy and new media and has several publications scheduled to appear in 2008.

## Huma Yusuf '08 in the Boston Globe

On December 28, 2007, current CMS graduate student **Huma Yusuf** published an essay titled "Coming of Age in the Benazir Bhutto Era" in *The Boston Globe*. "Until 1996, Benazir had seemed like a real-life Wonder Woman, having expanded the conditions of possibility for Pakistani women for over a decade since her entry into politics," Yusuf wrote. "While the boys at school emulated buff cricketers, my girl-friends and I would drape white scarves across our heads and try to imitate Benazir's awkward accent when speaking in Urdu, a vestige of her privilege and power. And who could blame us?" The full article is available online at [http://www.boston.com/news/world/asia/articles/2007/12/28/coming\\_of\\_age\\_in\\_the\\_benazir\\_bhutto\\_era](http://www.boston.com/news/world/asia/articles/2007/12/28/coming_of_age_in_the_benazir_bhutto_era).

## Jenkins Named Among Top 30 Most Influential Outsiders in Games

In late November, *Next Generation* Magazine published "Gaming's Most Influential Outsiders", which included **Henry Jenkins**. The list also included Clive Barker, Guillermo del Toro, Roger Ebert and Peter Jackson. The full list is available at [http://www.next-gen.biz/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=7780&Itemid=2&limit=1&limitstart=0](http://www.next-gen.biz/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=7780&Itemid=2&limit=1&limitstart=0).



*In the last four years **Neeti Gupta** SM '04 has touched down at Mayan ruins in Mexico, eighteenth-century castles along the River Rhine, and major cities across Europe, Australia, Canada, and India.*

## Gupta Deep Dives into Real-World CMS

*By Huma Yusuf*

On its website, the Comparative Media Studies program claims to prepare students for a broad range of careers, new opportunities, and even jobs that don't yet exist. This contention often provokes smirks and skepticism from master's degree candidates who dread unemployment after graduating from an interdisciplinary program. **Neeti Gupta's** career trajectory, however, shows that the CMS promise can hold true.

Since graduating from the CMS master's program in 2004, Neeti has been employed at Microsoft, where her work has allowed her to straddle the worlds of technology and culture, production and consumption, design and user experience. What began as an internship under Marc Smith with Microsoft Research's Community Technologies Group led to a three-year-long tenure working with Microsoft's Mobile and Embedded Devices Division.

In March 2007, Neeti switched tracks and joined the Unified Communications Group as a product manager. In that position, she designs and delivers 'ethnographic deep dives' with enterprise and mid-market customers to understand the audience for MSR's business communications packages. In the spirit of comparative

*(Continued on page 28)*