

News from the
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Bibliotech

News from the MIT Libraries, an official publication of the MIT Libraries, is published twice a year, in the fall and spring.

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Design

Pentagram

From the Director

With in-person learning in full swing this spring, the MIT Libraries continued to support the full range of teaching, learning, and research needs of MIT faculty and students—in person, online, and often both. Our physical spaces continued to be some of the most popular spots for MIT community members to gather, collaborate, and study. Library staff also continued to digitize unique materials for remote use and provide virtual research consultations and other remote services. Our fall MIT Reads talk with *Sexual Citizens* authors Jennifer S. Hirsch and Shamus Khan welcomed students for an in-person discussion, while an additional audience of 80 people participated online. Providing robust access to digital collections and remote services, while also maintaining an essential core of physical spaces, collections, and services, has never been more important.

This issue of *Bibliotech* also provides a balance of the digital and the tangible. Hear from Tina Pappas, head of Discovery and Engagement Platforms, as she talks about our vision for creating a platform for open, equitable digital access to information (p. 4). Read about the Libraries' Community Engagement program, which has hit its stride in part thanks to Hayden's new spaces (p. 7). Explore messages of thanks from our community (p. 12) that show the impact of both physical library spaces and materials and the digitization services that allow research to continue, wherever our users may be.

Our vision for libraries commits to maximizing digital access *and* recognizes the enduring value of physical spaces and materials. In today's world, it's critical to provide both, and essential to our ability to support MIT's core mission. Thank you for continuing to make that possible.



All my best,
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Photo: Shawn Henry



A Q&A with Tina Pappas

Tina Pappas joined the MIT Libraries as head of Discovery and Engagement Platforms in August 2021. In this role, Pappas oversees the tools and systems that provide access to our digital content for the MIT community and a global community of scholars. She recently spoke with *Bibliotech* about learning from the pandemic and empathizing with users for more inclusive design.

In this role, you'll be leading the strategy for MIT Libraries' "discovery ecosystem." What does that include?

In my role, the discovery ecosystem is effectively the digital service point for the Libraries. It encompasses a person's experience from the moment they engage us on the web until they've obtained the information they need. It includes the platforms, tools, interfaces, and data that comprise a user's experience in interacting with our services and collections.

What do you find compelling about the MIT Libraries' vision?

The most compelling part of the vision is the work we are doing every day to support it. Since arriving at the Libraries, I have remained impressed with how consistently we root our decisions and initiatives in the principles of MIT Libraries' Vision: A New Urgency. Our vision requires change, adaptability, and innovative thinking, the very same direction that the Covid-19 pandemic pushed the world towards. This unprecedented global event has further prepared us to meet and overcome the challenges involved in putting compelling ideas into practice. I am particularly excited to explore how we can leverage what we've learned through the pandemic to design and deploy services, processes, and experiences that are more equitable and inclusive.



You've described your work as "designing digital user experiences rooted in compassion, empathy, and allyship." Can you talk about what that means in the context of the Libraries?

My philosophy about user experience design connects strongly with our New Urgency principle: "We will create an environment to advance, support, and sustain equity, diversity, inclusivity, accessibility, and social justice initiatives through our work and within our organization." A key aspect to my approach is broadening our view of users by considering them as intersectional consumers of our services. A person's lived experiences, knowledge, and sometimes social identity characteristics can play a role in how they engage with, interpret, and perceive our digital touchpoints. If we can empathize with users on multiple levels, we can more concretely design experiences that are inclusive.

Community Crossroads

MIT Libraries' community engagement program fosters connection and supports wellbeing



I like to frame inclusive design work using bell hooks' feminist theory concept of a center and margin, where the center benefit from inclusion and the margin are left out. We all have multiple aspects of our identity, some that fall within a center and some within a margin. If we lead with compassion, we are better positioned to design for the margin and thereby create experiences that are more accommodating. Consider examples we see every day: left-handed folks living in a predominantly right-handed world or people with color vision deficiency (CVD) navigating color palettes optimized for people without CVD. How might we innovate if we made a habit of challenging our own worldviews when designing for inclusion?

What's a project your team is working on that you're excited about?

We are incredibly excited about launching our discovery program. This will entail a number of cross-departmental teams working together to develop a data-informed discovery strategy for the Libraries. We'll be focusing on how we can best meet the needs of our patrons through our digital touchpoints. In the near future, my team in particular will be doing user experience research, convening ideation sessions for technical design, and developing a roadmap to support the forthcoming strategic plan.

Engaging with communities is in libraries' DNA. With spaces and programs that are open to anyone—students, faculty, staff, and beyond—the MIT Libraries offer ways to explore, connect, and recharge. Community Engagement has existed as a formal program of the Libraries since 2015, supporting our users' needs outside of course-related work and research and forging connections across MIT. In 2016, it launched the Institute-wide reading and discussion program MIT Reads. Twelve titles, 38 campus partners, and 1,145 free books later, the Libraries continue to build relationships across the Institute.

“We want to explore the intersections of the Libraries' and the MIT community's interests and needs—intellectual curiosity, academic life, civic engagement, information citizenship, personal connectedness, lifelong learning, and wellness,” says Nina Davis-Millis, director of the Community Engagement program. “Our goal is to provide a platform, both physical and virtual, where the community comes together around ideas.”

Graduate students Katherine Young, William Wang, and Calvin Leung play in the Nexus in Hayden Library. The trio performed a work by Bohuslav Martinů originally commissioned for the dedication of Hayden in 1950.

**“I love [MIT Reads] discussion groups because they enrich the story for me, expose me to others’ perspectives on the books, and help me participate in the larger MIT community.”
–MIT staff member**



The program has four components:

- Events that highlight scholarship, research, artistic creation, or current community concerns;
- Social spaces within the Libraries’ physical footprint;
- Collaborations with Institute community partners, from student groups to employee resource groups to academic departments, as well as organizations beyond MIT; and
- Resources, whether programs, spaces, or collections, that promote wellness, contribute to MIT’s rich co-curricular learning environment, and foster an inclusive community.

New Hayden, new opportunities

The reopening of the renovated Hayden Library and Building 14 Courtyard has opened new possibilities for collaboration and drawn the attention of potential partners. Curated collections displays about travel became a natural place to promote MISTI, MIT’s hub for global experiences. The new mindfulness space, the Oasis, became the backdrop for signage from DoingWell, an initiative to prioritize student wellbeing. The Building 14 Courtyard was the scene of the grad student-conceived MIT Mysterious Book Exchange, where attendees browsed a selection of free books, wrapped in brown paper and identified only by recommendations from fellow community members. Every one of the 650 books was claimed in the first three hours.

In only a few months, the Nexus—Hayden’s flexible space that goes from reading room to event venue with the switch of a retractable wall—hosted everything from a music performance by a graduate student trio to a digital humanities speaker series to MIT Mystery Hunt activities. It is the new home of the authors@mit speaker series, presented in partnership with the MIT Press. And, in one of the most anticipated events of Hayden’s first year, the Nexus will also host writer, sociologist, and MacArthur Fellow Tressie McMillan Cottom for a speaker event that will also be live streamed.

“This is exactly the kind of event we envisioned when we talked about community outreach in the new Hayden,” says MIT Libraries Director Chris Bourg. “I hope Dr. Cottom will be the first of many marquee speakers that highlight the Libraries as a crossroads of intellectual curiosity.”

Students Bianca Lepe, Dasha Castillo, and Denzel Segbefia represented MIT Reads campus partners for the fall 2021 selection, *Sexual Citizens*.

Photo: Bryce Vickmark.

Community Engagement by the Numbers

MIT Mysterious Book Exchange.

Photo: Ned Barnett

1,212

Participants in Fall 2021 community engagement events

650

Books given away at the MIT Mysterious Book Exchange

38

Campus partners, including the Undergraduate Association, Graduate Student Council, MindHandHeart, Office of Student Wellness, and more

12

MIT Reads book selections, ranging from memoir and nonfiction to science fiction and short stories



Voices from the Community

Appreciation for library spaces and services

“I feel like I’ve underutilized MIT Libraries. They’ve been extremely helpful every single time I’ve turned to them. They’re great and amazing and wonderful and I will not stop gushing about how much I love them.”

-Undergraduate student

“Dear @mitlibraries staff filling my scan and deliver requests since late Oct., please know that you’ve given me a priceless holiday gift. Writing my dissertation became a lot easier once I was reunited with family...and you’re the reason I can do it.”

-Graduate student

“One of the joys of preparing for this class has been decking out the MIT Libraries with key books in Latinx Studies / Anthropology and History of Mexico, Central America, Caribbean. Shout-out to @mitlibraries for their help and for being on top of new acquisitions!”

-Faculty member

“Have you seen the new Hayden Library yet? Oh my god. It looks like the best library I’ve ever been in. It looks like 2050!”

-Overheard in the Infinite Corridor

“[Hayden] is pretty full, it’s a pretty popular place. I just like to come here... I’m just a fan of the type of energy this place has.”

-Undergraduate student

Staff News

New Appointments

Kendall Dawson
Access Services Assistant

El Housseine Driouch
IT Support Analyst

Lauren Fairman
Development Associate

Kevin Grant
Access Services Assistant

Ariel Hammel
Reserves Associate

Renée Hellenbrecht
Project Coordinator

Terra Huber
Conservation Associate

Alliah Humber
Electronic Resources Librarian

Emily Kramer
Administrative Assistant

Jessica Mallo
HR Generalist

Retirements

Chris Sherratt
*Atmospheric and Oceanic Sciences, Energy and Environment,
Nuclear Science and Engineering Librarian*

Jessica Neal
*Records Management
Project Manager*

Ian Paul
Digitization Associate

Cornelia Photopoulos
Access Services Assistant

Marcella Tam
Collection Strategist

Chris Tanguay
Processing Archivist

Thera Webb
Women@MIT Project Archivist

Cam West
Access Services Assistant

Hannah Winkler
Access Services Associate

Carrie Yates
Access Services Assistant

News from the MIT Press

The MIT Press celebrates sixty years of
illuminating publishing



2022 marks the 60th anniversary of the MIT Press, born in 1962 out of expansion efforts from MIT's original publishing arm, the Technology Press. In the years since, the MIT Press has grown into one of the largest and most distinguished university presses in the world and a leading global publisher of books and journals at the intersection of science, technology, art, social science, and design.

We are honoring our birthday throughout the year with new publications and special programming that acknowledges our rich history. We hope you will join the celebration by reading one of our spring titles, like Bob Buder's *Where Futures Converge: Kendall Square and the Making of a Global Innovation Hub* or Maia Weinstock's biography of MIT science icon, *Carbon Queen: The Remarkable Life of Nanoscience Pioneer Mildred Dresselhaus*; stopping by our elegant new bookstore located in the heart of Kendall Square; or viewing a display showcasing 60 years of MIT Press publications at Hayden Library. You can also visit us online to learn more about our anniversary celebrations and view our spring catalog of new titles.

Read, be inspired, and feel free to send us 60th anniversary cheer at happy60mitp@mit.edu.

What's New

A rare example of a spiral-locked letter from an unidentified author to the city consuls on December 16, 1638, verso (left) and recto (right).

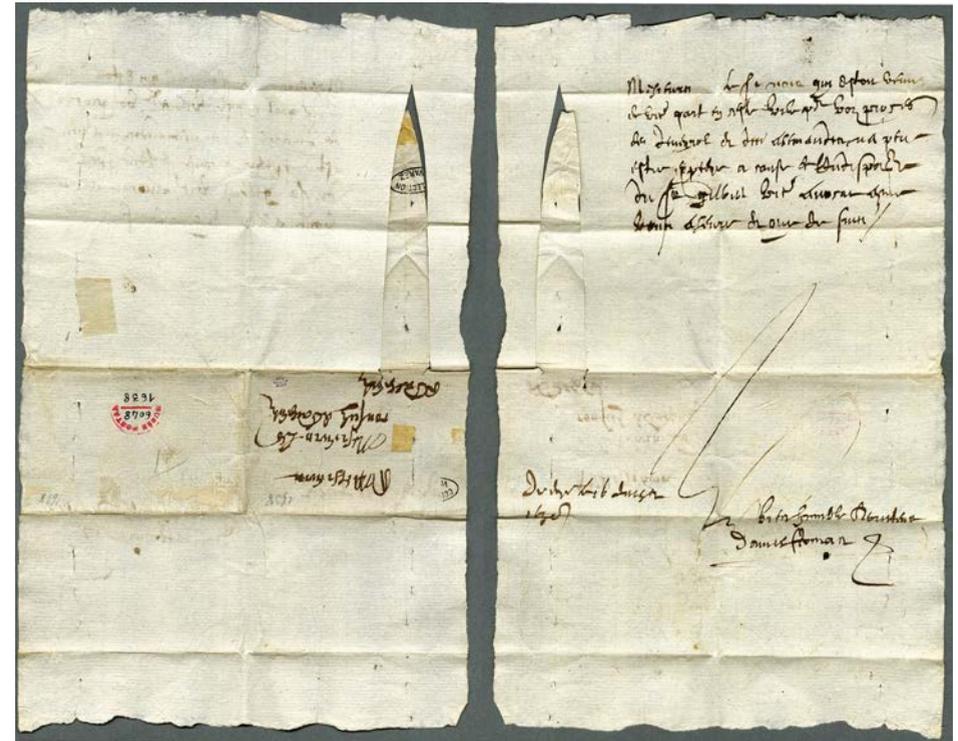
Photo: Musée de La Poste, Paris, Vivarez Collection.

Oral history project and exhibit trace the history of South Asian students at MIT

Distinctive Collections will partner with Sana Aiyar, associate professor of history, Ranu Boppana '87, MIT South Asian Alumni Association president, and Nureen Das, program manager, MIT India, to develop a new exhibit opening this fall. Featuring selections from a robust oral history program and work from Aiyar's students who are conducting research in Distinctive Collections, it documents the history of South Asian students and student groups at MIT. Uncovering the personal, professional, and intellectual journeys of MIT's South Asian affiliates, the exhibit will highlight the ways the Institute's past and present have been shaped by histories of immigration and race in America, decolonization and nation-building in South Asia, and globalization and technological revolutions across the world.

Hayden renovation featured in *Architectural Record*

The Hayden Library and Building 14 Courtyard renovations were featured in the February 2022 issue of *Architectural Record*, an issue examining adaptive reuse, renovation, and restoration projects from across the globe. "As you walk through the various parts of the library—inside and out—you are struck by the way spaces dramatically open up, yet cozy niche-like areas still abound," writes Deputy Editor Suzanne Stephens. "Daylight is constantly a lambent presence, and the view of the Charles River can always soothe the studious mind." Read the story at architecturalrecord.com.



New research reveals letterlocking secrets of Elizabeth I and Mary, Queen of Scots

The Unlocking History Research Group, led by Jana Dambrogio, Thomas F. Peterson (1957) Conservator at MIT Libraries, published a new article, "The spiral-locked letters of Elizabeth I and Mary, Queen of Scots," in the open-access *Electronic British Library Journal* in December. The article, which includes illustrations by MIT alumni Annie Dunn '17 and Matthew Li '16, presents evidence of the use of the "spiral lock," a highly secure mechanism used by monarchs and other letter writers in early modern Europe to seal their correspondence. Among the most spectacular examples of the technique is a letter written by Mary, Queen of Scots, on the eve of her execution in 1587. Read the new research, featured by *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, NPR, CNN, and more, at bl.uk/ebj.



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