Mary Fuller Appointed Head of Literature Faculty

Dean Deborah Fitzgerald has announced the appointment of Professor Mary Fuller as Head of the Literature Faculty, to succeed the eight-year term of the present Head, Professor James Buzard, who will step down from the position at the end of June.

Widely recognized as a leading scholar in the study of Early Modern accounts of travel, exploration, and cultural contact, and the author of two books and numerous articles with significant international and interdisciplinary impact, Professor Fuller came to MIT as a member of the Literature Faculty in 1989 and rose to the rank of Professor in the Fall of 2009. She has served the MIT Educational Commons as a Freshman Advisor and participated in numerous SHASS and Institute committees, chairing the HOC in 2006-07 and serving variously on SOCR, the D’Arbeloff Selection Committee, the CI-M Working Group, the Faculty Policy Committee, the Committees on the Undergraduate and on the Graduate Program, the Corporation Joint Advisory Committee, among other committee services. For the last two years, she has been Associate Chair of the Faculty.

Professor Fuller has lectured extensively, served as Project Director of the NEH Summer Institute on “British and Indigenious Cultural Encounters in Native North America,” received four distinguished fellowships toward the furtherance of her research (Newberry, Huntington, Folger, John Carter Brown), served on editorial boards, refereed promotion cases for other institutions, and often has been called upon to review the work of other scholars. Fuller’s scholarly eminence derives from her two books (Voyages in Print: English Travel to America, 1576-1624 [Cambridge University Press, 1995] and Remembering the Early Modern Voyage: English Narratives in the Age of European Expansion [Palgrave, 2008]), both dealing with contemporary accounts of voyages of exploration.

Professor Fuller’s scholarly pursuits and academic achievements are balanced with her passion for martial arts. She has practiced aikido for more than 20 years, has taught in numerous New England dojos, and travels to seminars in the U.S. and internationally. She was recently promoted to yondan (4th degree blackbelt) in aikido.

Sandy Alexandre Awarded Tenure

The Literature Faculty is delighted to announce that Professor Sandy Alexandre has just been promoted to the rank of Associate Professor with tenure. The promotion will take effect July 1, 2013. Alexandre is a scholar of American and African-American literature and culture and the author of a recent book, The Properties of Violence: Claims to Ownership in Representations of Lynching (U Mississippi Press, 2013), as well as numerous articles. Her work focuses mainly on racial violence and its representations and the valuation of material objects in literature and culture. She has taught courses such as “Poverty in the American Novel,” “American Trilogies,” and “The Harlem Renaissance.” She is currently at work on a book that will extend her study of the historical relationship of African-Americans to the right to own personal property. This new book, tentatively titled Up From Chattels, asks, What alternative modes of knowledge production and innovative ideas about the valuation of property can we obtain from literature centered on a group of people who were once exchanged merchandise themselves? According to Literature Faculty Head James Buzard, “Sandy Alexandre is a dynamic, gifted, highly creative young scholar who is truly an asset to our program, the Institute, and our profession. We are pleased at this well-deserved award of tenure and look forward to working with her for many years to come.”
The Literature Faculty has had an exceptional record of publication over the past several years and celebrated their accomplishments with friends and colleagues at a reception on May 1st. In addition to a number of book publications, contributions to scholarly journals and collections have been numerous and noteworthy.

Featured here is just a sample of the published work of the Literature Faculty.

Professor Sandy Alexandre’s *The Properties of Violence: Claims to Ownership in Representations of Lynching* (University Press of Mississippi) marks an innovation in African-American studies, connecting the social and cultural repercussions of the portrayal of lynching in late-nineteenth and twentieth-century American photographs, poetry, and fiction with the attribution of possessions and property.

To read more: http://web.mit.edu/newsoffice/2013/sandy-alexandre-the-properties-of-violence-0517.html

In *Fragments and Assemblages: Forming Compilations of Medieval London* (University of Chicago Press), Professor Arthur Bahr argues for a two-fold interpretation of London’s medieval manuscript heritage: one which treats manuscripts as meaningfully assembled texts, whose contents shed light on the city’s literary, social, and political cultures, and another which treats them as artifacts, whose fragmented character rewards literary analysis in its own right. To read more: http://shass.mit.edu/research/spotlight/bahr-fragments-assemblages

Bahr also co-edited (with Alexandra Gillespie of the University of Toronto) a special issue of *The Chaucer Review*, whose subject was “Medieval English Manuscripts: Form, Aesthetics, and the Literary Text,” with an introduction to the volume co-authored by the editors.

The Teachers College Press and National Writing Project has just published a Teacher's Strategy Guide, *Reading in a Participatory Culture: Remixing Moby-Dick in the English Classroom*. Largely edited by Literature Senior Lecturer Wyn Kelley and University of Southern California Professor Henry Jenkins, the Guide was developed by a group of scholars associated with MIT’s Project New Media Literacies (NML) with the principle that current portable and semi-portable electronic means of communication and information-sharing form the basis of a new participatory culture, particularly among the young. Why *Moby-Dick*? As Kelley points out, Melville’s novel is a grand appropriation and re-contextualization of materials from heterogeneous sources, not unlike the media-products of the new participatory culture—a remix that integrates snippets of travel narratives, philosophical works, and scientific texts with retellings of Biblical stories, informational chapters on the science and lore of whaling culture, and material from dozens of other sources.
Awards & Honors

Stephanie Frampton Receives Four Distinguished Prizes

Stephanie Frampton, Assistant Professor of Literature at MIT, has recently received four distinguished awards. The first of these is the American Academy of Rome Andrew Heiskell Post-Doctoral Rome Prize for her work in Ancient Studies. Professor Frampton will spend the coming year in Rome completing her first book *Alphabetic Order: The Roman Alphabet and the Material Culture of Literature in the Ancient World*, a study of the intersections of writing media and literary culture in ancient Italy under contract with Harvard University Press.

Professor Frampton is also the recipient of the Andrew W. Mellon Fellowship for Scholars in Critical Bibliography at the Rare Book School (RBS). This three-year fellowship provides a group of twenty fellows with intensive, hands-on training at RBS and the opportunity to work with mentors from the bibliographical community. Also as part of the Mellon fellowship, Professor Frampton will work with colleagues in Literature and other SHASS departments to organize a conference at MIT related to the history of the book and textual materiality in the future.

Also in support of the research and publication of *Alphabetic Order*, Stephanie has received the Margo Tytus Fellowship for summer residency from the University of Cincinnati Department of Classics and the Loeb Classical Library Foundation Fellowship from the Harvard University Department of Classics. As Literature Head James Buzard remarks, “receiving one of these awards is a great accomplishment; receiving all four is truly remarkable for a scholar at such an early stage of her career.”

Shankar Raman Wins Levitan Prize in the Humanities

Dean Deborah K. Fitzgerald has announced that Shankar Raman, Professor of Literature, has received the 2013 James A. ('45) and Ruth Levitan Prize in the Humanities. The $25,000 prize is awarded annually to support innovative and creative scholarship in the humanities. Read the full story at http://web.mit.edu/newsoffice/2013/shankar-raman-wins-2013-levitan-prize-in-the-humanities.html

Lit@Mit Prizes Awarded

Peter S. Donaldson Prize in Literature Awarded to Anthony Farrell

The Peter S. Donaldson Prize for Excellence in Literature was awarded to graduating senior Anthony Farrell on May 13. The annual Prize recognizes a Literature major who excels academically in his or her literary studies and is an engaging participant of the MIT Literature community.

John Hildebidle Poetry Prize

This year, in honor of retiring Professor John Hildebidle, the Literature Section established a prize in his name. The prize recognizes students who display academic talent in 21L.004 “Reading Poetry” and who enrich the MIT poetry community. This year’s award went to senior Katy Gero ‘13 and Jeffery Sperling ’15.

Arthur Bahr Recipient of the Hayes Career Development Chair

Associate Professor Arthur Bahr of the Literature Faculty has been named the recipient of the Alfred Henry and Jean Morrison Hayes Career Development Professorship for a three-year term that began on July 1, 2012. Mr. Hayes was a member of the Chemical Engineering class of 1929, and he and Mrs. Hayes established this professorship through a bequest. In addition to the honor and prestige carried by the appointment, the award includes a scholarly allowance that will enable Professor Bahr to advance his archival research into the four poems now uniquely preserved in British Library MS Cotton Nero A.x: *Pearl, Cleanliness, Patience*, and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and to pursue educational initiatives to further the study of Ancient and Medieval literatures at MIT.
**Events**

### 2012 Discover Literature FPOP

Literature participated once again in the Freshman Pre-Orientation Program (FPOP) at the end of August 2012, touring incoming freshman through Boston’s rich literary offerings. Professors Noel Jackson, Mary Fuller, Arthur Bahr, and Wyn Kelley organized events that involved discussions of notable Bostonian poets, Boston’s Rare Book Collections, the Old South Meeting House, Bunker Hill, as well as a trip to Concord to tour The Old Manse and Louisa May Alcott’s Orchard House. The four days of activity concluded with a visit to Hawthorne’s House of Seven Gables, the Peabody-Essex Museum, and the Jonathan Corwin House in Salem.

### Professors Tapscott & Resnick Visit Madrid

On January 24, Professor Stephen Tapscott gave a reading of his poetry and translations at the historic International Institute in Spain, the Madrid seat of a Massachusetts charitable corporation founded in 1892. Professor Tapscott read a selection of his translations of works by Pablo Neruda and Gabriela Mistral as well as his own poems and spoke on his work as a translator of Spanish-language and Polish poetry. He was invited to speak in Madrid by Professor Margery Resnick, who is president of the International Institute. During Professor Tapscott’s visit, he and Professor Resnick were invited to appear on Radio Exterior, the international service of Spanish National Radio. They were interviewed for over an hour about MIT and the humanities, Stephen Tapscott’s poetry, and the historical place of the International Institute as a center for liberal learning.

### Literature Sponsors Folk Music Recitals

In the spirit of the Literature Faculty’s ongoing regard for works of popular culture, Professor Ruth Perry and Music Professor George Ruckert regularly offer a subject in “The Folk Music of North America and the British Isles.” In connection with the class, they organized visiting musicians and balladeers to offer demonstrations of traditional singing, fiddle and banjo playing, free and open to the public. This year’s program included singer and handloom weaver Norman Kennedy, sarodist George Ruckert, banjo historian and collector Jim Bollman, fiddler, singer and banjoist Jeff Davis, and singers and folk musicians Sara Grey and Kieron Means.

### Annual IAP Offerings

#### Pleasures of Poetry

Pleasures of Poetry, now 20+ years old, has become a signature feature of the Independent Activities Period. Each weekday during January, Literature Faculty, with help from friends, host an hour-long discussion of memorable poems. This year, former U.S. poet laureate Robert Pinsky was a guest moderator. Pinsky led a discussion of Elizabeth Bishop’s “At the Fishhouses” and at a later session Professor David Thorburn moderated a discussion of Pinsky’s “Gulf Music.”

#### The Mobile Reading Marathon

The Mobile Reading Marathon has become an annual tradition of reading classics in one day-long session. This year, under the guidance of Professors Stephanie Frampton and Diana Henderson, faculty, staff, students, and other lovers of literature read and performed Homer’s Odyssey at a number of campus locations over the span of a 13-hour day.

#### “On the Screen” (21L.345)

“On the Screen” (21L.345) was also offered for the second time this year during IAP. This course examines works of film, television or other screen-based media, with emphasis on texts that are related by genre, time period, style, or director. Professor Alvin Kibel chose the course topic “American Film Genres.”

### Kevin Jerome Everson Gives Multimedia Presentation at MIT

In February 2013, Kevin Jerome Everson, Professor of Art at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville and 2012 Alpert Award recipient in Film/Video, gave a multimedia presentation, Recent Practice, to an MIT audience. The event was hosted by Professor Sandy Alexandre and co-sponsored by Literature, the SHASS Dean’s Office, and the Office of the Dean for Graduate Education. Everson’s films are concerned with tasks imposed by physical and socio-economic conditions in the lives of working-class African Americans and other people of African descent. Eschewing realism, Everson favors a strategy that abstracts everyday actions and statements into theatrical gestures, in which real people perform fictional scenarios based on their own lives.