Coach House Institute — Report
Faculty Council — October 14, 2011

During the fall of 2011, the Coach House Institute (CHI) has been focused on events and activities related to the centenary anniversary of the birth of Marshall McLuhan. A tremendous amount of international attention is being directed towards Toronto during this time. Through its McLuhan Program in Culture & Technology, the CHI is leading the University’s response, with a wide range of activities and events.

1. McLuhan 100: A team consisting of (i) Seamus Ross, Dean of the Faculty, (ii) Dominique Scheffel-Dunand, Director of the CHI’s, (iii) Llilie Zendel, Director of Culture Heritage for the City of Toronto, (iv) Mark Surman, Director, Mozilla Foundation, (v) Carolyn Taylor, Cape Farewell Foundation, and (vi) Brian Cantwell Smith, Director of the CHI, has spearheaded and coordinated events associated with the McLuhan centenary. Some accomplishments to date:

   a. Fundraising: McLuhan 100 has raised an additional $370,000 in addition to the financial and human resources contributed by iSchool to centenary events, including: (i) $50K from SSHRC; (ii) $100K from the Province of Ontario’s Ontario Cultural Attractions Fund; (iii) $150K from the Celebrate Ontario Blockbuster Tourism Fund; (iv) $50K from the City of Toronto Economic Development and Culture division; and (v) $20K from Ryerson University.

   b. Partnerships: In addition to funding listed above, in-kind, media, and venue partnerships have been negotiated to ensure that McLuhan 100 celebrations extend far beyond the campus, including but not limited to: (i) Mozilla, (ii) CBC Radio; (iii) MaRS, (iii) Toronto Public Library, (iv) DigitalJournal, (v) French Consulate, Toronto (vi) Italian Cultural Institute, Toronto, (vii) U.S. Embassy, Canada, (viii) Canadian Embassy, Paris; (ix) Goethe Institute, (x) Grano, (xi) Scotiabank CONTACT Photography Festival, (xii) National Film Board of Canada, (xiii) OneStop Media, (xiv) Pattison Digital Advertising, (xv) International Festival of Authors, (xvi) Gladstone Hotel, (xvii) Treehouse Group, (xvii) TI-NARS (“This Is Not a Reading Series”), and many, many others.

   c. A key aim of the McLuhan 100 project in Toronto has been as well to strengthen and develop Canadian-European relations, particularly in the context of art, communications, and technology. While the focus of activity for McLuhan 100 has been Toronto and Canada, select European partners have and will continue to play a role within McLuhan 100 celebrations.1

2. Events: A sample of events conducted to date:

   a. April 6: Future of Media. McLuhan100 sponsored “The Future of Media,” focusing discussion on the relationship between start-ups and media companies; entrepreneurial journalism; gamification; paywalls; and the future of media. Speakers included:

      i. Jamie Angus, Acting Head of News, BBC World News.
      ii. Jon Taylor, Senior Director of Content, CTV Digital Media.
      iii. Mathew Ingram, senior writer with technology blog network GigaOM.
      iv. Chris Boutet, senior producer for digital media at the National Post.
      v. Kathy Vey, Editor-in-Chief, OpenFile

   The panel discussion was moderated by DigitalJournal.com Managing Editor, David Silverberg. The clips from Future of Media April 2011 event are in order below.

1http://www.transmediale.de/mcluhan-europe-2011
b. **April 4: McLuhan Award at TARA.** McLuhan100 sponsored a new award at this year's TARA Awards at TIFF Bell Lightbox to honour McLuhan for having profoundly affected the development of television (and other media) theory and for coining the phrases "The Medium is The Message" and "The Global Village." Sponsored by McLuhan100, The "Marshall McLuhan Students Choice Award" was awarded by Director of the Faculty of Information McLuhan Program in Culture and Technology to Wil Noack, the Ryerson RTA student who had most contributed to the betterment of the RTA community as voted by his/her peers.

c. **May 5–29: Scotiabank CONTACT Photography Festival 2011 – Figure and Ground:** The writings of McLuhan provided a critical focus for CONTACT 2011, as a catalyst for Contact’s discourse on photography. The McLuhan Program in Culture and Technology partnered this year again with CONTACT to show Robert Bean’s art exhibit “Illuminated Manuscripts” at the Coach House. From photo-documentary projects to conceptual narrative approaches to image making, the examination of figure and ground as metaphor, allegory, composition or probe fueled the focus for CONTACT 2011 in celebration of the centenary of the birth of Marshall McLuhan. Close to 1000 visitors came to the Coach House to see the exhibit.

d. **May 3–29: Robert Bean Installation ILLUMINATED MANUSCRIPTS at Scotiabank CONTACT.** To commemorate McLuhan centenary, Canadian artist Robert Bean was commissioned to create a site-specific exhibition in McLuhan’s former seminar room at the Coach House. *Illuminated Manuscripts* is a project about writing, archives and photography. It emphasizes the figure/ground relationship that is physically inscribed on the surface of Marshall McLuhan’s documents and manuscripts and contextualizes his writing process within a framework of obsolete technology. The art exhibit was organized by the McLuhan Program in Culture and Technology, the Faculty of Information Coach House Institute (UofT) and McLuhan100.

e. **April 30: Robert Bean Talk Coach House:** Within the context of McLuhan’s former seminar room, Robert Bean discussed his site-specific project about writing, archives, and photography at the McLuhan Coach House, 39A Queen’s Park Crescent.

f. **Launched May 7: McLuhan’s Toronto – Audio Tour with CBC’s Nora Young** (ongoing and available on CBC’s website). Co-produced for McLuhan100 by Nora Young, host of CBC’s Spark, this tour enables Torontonians and tourists to discover McLuhan’s Toronto. It shines a spotlight on Toronto’s extraordinary intellectual and creative communities; showcases diverse memories of the social, artistic and intellectual networks that constituted the McLuhan phenomenon; helps Torontonians appreciate the evolution of technologies in the 20th Century and the transformation of their city into a networked society. McLuhan Program in Culture and Technology Director Dominique Scheffel-Dundur identified and made arrangements for tour guides Eric McLuhan (eldest son of Marshall McLuhan), Frances Halpenny (U.of.T Press), David Rokey, B.W.Powe (York University) and Marion Lewis (A-Space). Nora Young and her production team at Spark partnered with McLuhan100 to bring this to fruition.

g. **May 7: Jane’s Walk—Guided Walking Tour of McLuhan’s Toronto.** This tour was led by Dominique Scheffel-Dundur, Director of the McLuhan Program in Culture and Technology, and Paul Farrelly. Using the landmarks identified by Scheffel-Dundur for the audio tour above, it too shone a spotlight on Toronto’s extraordinary intellectual and creative communities; showcasing diverse memories of the social, artistic and intellectual networks that constituted the McLuhan phenomenon and helped Torontonians appreciate the evolution of technologies in the 20th Century and the transformation of their city into a networked society.

h. **May 28–29: McLuhan100 at Doors Open Toronto:** Doors Open Toronto is a city-wide celebration of Toronto’s built form. In 2011 upwards of 150 buildings of architectural, historic, cultural and/or social significance opened their doors to the public. In partnership with Doors Open Toronto, McLuhan100 highlighted both the McLuhan Coach House as well as the iSchool. More than 450 visi-
tors discovered McLuhan's Centre for Culture and Technology this year for Doors Open.

i. **June 6-18: McLuhan100 at MaRS – Net Change Week Installation.** Through the Vanishing Point at Net Change Week, an installation by artists Lewis Kaye and David Rokeby was presented in partnership with MaRS and SIG@MaRS during Net Change Week (a week dedicated to exploring the intersection between social technology and social change.) Over 2,000 young social innovators attended the week and the McLuhan100 partnership built additional exposure for Net Change Week by reaching a relevant audience throughout Canada and in Europe.

To reflect on the enduring influence of McLuhan and the relevance of his theories, Lewis Kaye and David Rokeby were commissioned to create these site-specific works at the McLuhan Program in Culture and Technology. As the framework of the installation they drew from Marshall McLuhan's book *Through the Vanishing Point: Space in Poetry and Painting* (coauthored by Harley Parker), 1968, which explores the way electronic media fragments the homogenous experience of space. Through the Vanishing Point was also presented at the Marshall McLuhan Salon of the Embassy of Canada in Berlin until July 8 as part of the McLuhan in Europe 2011 project. In the fall of 2011, it will be exhibited at the Canadian Cultural Centre in Paris, from September 27 until mid-November 2011. It was on exhibition in a specially designed space at MaRS and launched in a special McLuhan100 reception on June 6th as the signature installation for MaRS' Net Change Week.

j. **July 15-24: Underground Tarot – Art Installation.** Critical Art Ensemble's (CAE) Underground Tarot featured 24 ten-second mini commercials called “Underground Tarot.” Subway passengers were confronted by a series of clips that appeared to be and blend with existing advertisement, while placing blame on everyone and no one – a careful strategy used by American ‘tactical media’ collective Critical Art Ensemble (CAE) for showing in a potentially censorious environment. Sponsored by McLuhan100 and commissioned by Sharon Switzer (Digital Content and Programming Curator for OneStop Media Group) it ran during the week of McLuhan’s birthday, from July 15 to July 24 on the network of 300 OneStop LCD screens in 60 stations throughout the Toronto Transit Commission subway system.

k. **July 15: DesignMeets Social Consciousness.** DesignMeets brings together Canadian designers from all walks of life to foster interdisciplinary collaboration and build a stronger, more connected Canadian design community. McLuhan100 partnered with DesignMeets to present an evening for Canada’s design community to reflect on twitter, facebook and other social media avenues and consider whether they put them closer to their clients/users/customers or farther away, and how this affected their local sense of social consciousness. In honour of McLuhan’s centenarian designers listened, discussed, and shared thoughts with designers from all disciplines, sparked by select speakers who shared 5-ideas and 5-images in 5ish-minutes as a catalyst, including one by McLuhan Program in Culture and Technology Director Dominique Scheffel-Dunand.

l. **July 18—Our City As Classroom: A McLuhan100 Three Part Series hosted by Jesse Hirsh. Part One: The City That Made McLuhan.** In partnership with Toronto Public Library, CBC Technology Writer Jesse Hirsh kicked off McLuhan100’s July celebrations with our second “Monday Night Seminar”, and the first of three sessions on the theme of Our City as Classroom. In it, Hirsh probed such queries as, “What role did Toronto play in Marshall McLuhan’s understanding of media and how were we affected in return?”

m. **July 18-24: McLuhan Legacy Network Festival.** McLuhan100 sponsored select McLuhan Legacy Network birthday week events, including two held at the iSchool:

1. **McLuhan at the iSchool – Reading and Publishing: Paper or Screen.** Authors, publishers and aggregators came together to discuss the changing format of the book and the future of reading, publishing and libraries. Panel participants included: Jian Ghomeshi—host of Q, Radio One, CBC; John Cruickshank—Publisher, Toronto Star; Susan Caron—Manager, Collection Development, Toronto Public Library; Nathan Maharaj—Merchandising Director, Kobo eReader; Alana Wil-
ii. **McLuhan at the iSchool—McLuhan's Poetics: Modernism and Media.** McLuhan's Poetics offered the insights of artists, filmmakers, poets and architects exploring how modernist literature shaped McLuhan's understanding of techne and technology, and what today's poetry and art reveal about the mentality today. Panel participants were Bruce Elder—Ryerson University; Philip Beesley—architect, University of Waterloo; Judith Fitzgerald—poet, author, critic and cultural commentator Glove and Mail; Paul Hoffert—York University; Izabella Pruska-Oldenhof—filmmaker, Ryerson University, and Dot Tuer—cultural theorist, OCADU.

n. **July 12—DesignMeets McLuhan and You!** As a follow-up to the overwhelming enthusiasm from the design community at the July 15th DesignMeets event, McLuhan100 invited the design community to gather at the McLuhan Coach House, the very place where he held his legendary Monday night seminars, and use the occasion of the late McLuhan's birth day to explore the points of collision between select McLuhan 'probes' and the design community. The event explored such probes as: How will we fashion discourse, community, culture, authority & expertise? What will be the cartographies of learning, responsibility, and compassion in this digitally mediated landscape? What will happen to learning, to inquiry, to critical intellectual debate? What are the effects of technology on culture, on knowledge, on humanity?

o. **August 15: Our City as Classroom - A McLuhan100 Three Part Series hosted by Jesse Hirsh: Part Two—McLuhan's Legacy: How We Do Things Around Here.** Toronto's present as an international media centre connects back to McLuhan's understanding of a global village, a vision that helped prepare our city for its role as part of this global culture. Our city's diversity reflects our understanding of media and our embrace of McLuhan's teachings. Yet what can we learn from his legacy that applies to the problems of our present? What warnings did he try to offer that come with this global village, and have they been successfully heeded? How does our city reflect his work and are we making the most of his legacy?

p. **Sept 6: Launch of the Gutenberg Galaxy centennial edition + 'PowerPoint Karaoke'.** McLuhan100 partnered with University of Toronto Press and TINARS (This Is Not A Reading Series), and invited Michael, Eric and Elizabeth McLuhan to join four independent thinkers from across Toronto challenged to answer questions. In a round of 'PowerPoint Karaoke', speakers had ten minutes with twenty randomly selected slides to make their point. The event was held at The Gladstone Hotel (Toronto's indie-arts epicentre), to a full house and healthy book sales.

q. **Sept 26: Our City as Classroom - A McLuhan100 Three Part Series hosted by Jesse Hirsh: Part Three—Toronto's future In McLuhan's Global Village.** Having looked at the past and examined the present, Jesse's final session takes participants into the future. Toronto has a unique and global advantage in the form of McLuhan's legacy. As a city we've embraced and embedded a culture of innovation and understanding into our social fabric and cultural identity. He will ask what we can do moving forward to nurture and extend this capacity so as to ensure Toronto thrives in the turbulent and exciting times ahead.

r. **Oct. 1: McLuhan Coach House: Venue for Scotiabank Nuit Blanche 2011.** The Faculty of Information McLuhan Program in Culture and Technology Director has partnered with the Justina Barnicke Gallery Director to show “Everything That Is Solid Melts into Air (2008) by Mark Boulos” at the Coach House for the 2011 Scotiabank Nuit Blanche. Art exhibition to run at the Coach house from September 23 to November 16. The artwork borrows its title from a sentence from the Communist Manifesto, and delves into the idea of commodity fetishism applied to the production of oil in Nigeria and its subsequent speculative use in North America. Consisting of a two-channel synchronised video installation, each screen depicts one of the two factions struggling for control of the precious good. On one screen we find the Nigerian guerrillas that seek to alleviate the misery
of the region by redistributing the oil resources by all means necessary. The opposing screen shows the theatricality of the Chicago Mercantile Exchange, the largest exchange of futures and derivatives, where corporations trade goods that don't even exist yet. That removal of the material stuff - absent from both the land where it comes from and trade where is exchanged- is what Boulos means by 'melting into air', the path to metaphysical qualities. The two facing screens, which portray such polarised but inextricable realities, build a dialectic and hypnotic space for thought.

3. Upcoming events include:

a. **Oct. 16: Edge of Academe.** As part of establishing a legacy for McLuhan centenary and to build on McLuhan’s seminar series at the Centre for Culture and Technology—a site of incalculable historic, symbolic & iconic value, the Faculty of Information Coach House Institute at the University of Toronto is re-launching The McLuhan Program in Culture and Technology Monday Night Seminars.

   McLuhan’s celebrated Coach House existed indeed on the boundary of the university—physically, intellectually, organizationally. The goal of the Monday Night Seminar is therefore to re-imagine the space on the edge, and renew conversations that will intensify the points of contact among digitally-assembled learning communities, and address public craving to comprehend the new social order.

b. **Oct 19-29: McLuhan100 and The Future of The Book at the International Festival of Authors.** McLuhan100 is sponsoring and co-presenting a sidebar event at the International Festival of Authors engaging McLuhanesque themes of The Future of the Author; The Future of Publishing; and the Role of the Author in the Future. Located at Harbourfront Centre.

c. **Nov 6: Marshall McLuhan: Music, Sound, and Acoustic Space.** McLuhan100 is promoting this Panel discussion taking place at the Arts and Letters Club of Toronto. Panellists include Phil Rose, Eric McLuhan and others TBC. Panel chair: Donald J. Gillies

4. **Nov 7-10: McLuhan100: Then | Now | Next: International Conference + DEW Line Festival**

   To be held at various locations throughout Toronto, McLuhan100: Then | Now | Next is the closing conference and festival of the McLuhan100 year, and a cultural mash up of art, academe and digital media that will showcase leading and emerging artists and presenters, host provocative debate and discourse on the hottest topics in digital media, present esteemed experts from all walks of digital media, and serve as a place for players big and small to connect and plot the future of digital media and its effect on culture. McLuhan Then | Now | Next will be equal parts enlightenment and digital media playground, blending each day's intelligent discussion and all-important networking with cultural happenings and events at venues large and small, all blurring the boundaries between academe, culture and digital media.

5. **DEW Line Festival.** McLuhan was fond of framing artists as harbingers of cultural change, made clear in his famous quote from *Understanding Media*, "I think of art, at its most significant, as a DEW line, a Distant Early Warning system that can always be relied on to tell the old culture what is beginning to happen to it." Festival events throughout the week are aimed at animating this metaphor, culminating in a finale concert called 'Climate Is Culture' on November 10th at Koerner Hall co-hosted by CBC 'The Signal' Laurie Brown and Cape Farewell Founder David Buckland. The evening will feature performances by The Stars’ lead singer Amy Milan (unplugged) and a full set by Patrick Watson whose sound been compared to Rufus Wainwright, [Andrew Bird, Nick Drake, Jeff Buckley and Pink Floyd for its experimental musicianship. The concert uses McLuhan’s view to help contextualize the work of Cape Farewell and introduce Cape Farewell to the general public. As a legacy of McLuhan100, CBC will announce a special DEW Commission to be created in 2012.

6. **McLuhan Fellowships:** In association with St. Michael’s College, the Faculty of Information has announced five communications and media experts as recipients of five Centenary McLuhan Fellowships in the field of culture and technology: Dr. Dimitris Gkinosatis, Dr. Paolo Granata, Dr. Stephen Kline, Dr. Eric McLuhan
and Dr. Daniel Robinson.

The centenary McLuhan fellows will spend up to a half-year exploring the future, past, and present of Marshall McLuhan’s influential theories. The fellows will interact with faculty and students by lecturing at the iSchool’s Colloquium Series, giving talks based on their research, hosting workshops, and participating in conferences. Renamed in honour of McLuhan’s birth, the fellowships are awarded to academics.

a. **Dr Dimitris Gkinosatis** is a Lecturer in Philosophy & Media Aesthetics at the Athens School of Fine Arts. For the past fifteen years, his work has focused on injecting human sciences perspectives to the 'hard' sciences of communication and information technologies. More recently, his research and lecturing have been oriented towards a form of epistemology, where philosophy meets the scientific theories and technologies of aesthetic perception. The research project he will be pursuing involves the examination—in philosophical-epistemological terms—of the deep changes brought about in the field of traditional theoretical and historical study of artworks (mainly images) by the extensive use of advanced information technologies and innovative scientific methods.

b. **Dr. Paolo Granata** is professor of Digital Catalogues for Cultural Heritage at the University of Bologna, and Multimedia for Cultural Heritage at the Academy of Fine Arts in Bologna. His main books are Arte in Rete (2001), Videoart Yearbook (2009), Arte, estetica e nuovi media (2009). His current research is focused on the relationships between art, aesthetics, and new media. Though one of McLuhan’s main achievements was exploring the relationship between media and the senses, little attention has been paid to how McLuhan’s aesthetological approach could be applied as a tool to assess and understand the evolution expressions of contemporary art. Dr. Granata’s project aims to fill this gap by addressing the historical, theoretical and phenomenological aspects of the subject.

c. **Dr. Stephen Kline** is Professor in the School of Communication at Simon Fraser University, and the Director of the Media Analysis Laboratory. His research focuses on audience practices, community media education, advertising and consumerism, video game policy debates, children’s food and toy marketing, and family consumption dynamics. During his Fellowship, Dr. Kline will be working on a half-hour documentary on media-saturated family life in Canada exploring relation between the patterns of children’s sedentary lifestyles, food consumption and their consumer socialization.

d. **Dr. Eric McLuhan**, eldest son of Marshall McLuhan, will be researching the grand renaissance of the 19th-20th centuries based on the premise that no one appears to realize that we have been immersed in an enormous renaissance for the last century and a half. He says that perhaps it’s not surprising inasmuch as it usually takes those involved in a renaissance a century or more to realize that that is where they have been. The fact does account for the strange social and cultural hubris that has been our lot during that time.

e. **Dr. Daniel Robinson** is Associate Professor and Rogers Chair in Media Studies at the University of Western Ontario. He has edited two books on communication history in Canada, both of which discuss McLuhan’s scholarship. During his stay in Toronto, Dr. Robinson will be working on two journal articles, one on the impact of Harold Innis’ Empire and Communications on later historical and communications scholarship for the Italian journal Contemporanea, the other on the influence of McLuhan’s The Mechanical Bride on the field of advertising studies in North America. He will be completing a book manuscript that examines the marketing/advertising of controversial goods, and corresponding social/political regulation throughout the 20th century. He will be designing a graduate-level course on communication history in North America.

Respectfully submitted
Brian Cantwell Smith
October 14, 2011