Coach House Institute  
Self Study 2008–2015  
April 9, 2015

This report constitutes a self-study of the Faculty of Information’s Coach House Institute (CHI) and McLuhan Program in Culture and Technology (MPCT), from the launch of the CHI in 2008 as an “extradepartmental unit” (EDU) at the University of Toronto (U.of.T) to the present. The documents covers some background facts on the history of the MPCT, the rationale for launching the CHI, the events and activities undertaken over the review period, and recent planning and envisioning for the CHI/MPCT for its next phase. It consists of three parts:

1. Executive Summary  
2. Self-Study  
3. Appendices

The self-study “tells the story” of the McLuhan Program in Culture and Technology, how the CHI emerged out of it, what the CHI has accomplished in its first phase of existence, and how we see the combination developing in the future. In the interest of length, and for ease of readability, considerable detail on specific programs, events, people, courses, etc., has been omitted. For the record, some of the most important supporting documents are included in a series of Appendices.

Executive Summary

For decades, the legacy of Marshall McLuhan and his modest but iconic Coach House at the University of Toronto have lain fallow, as assets of enormous but unrealized potential. Over the review period, an effort was launched to redress this situation—to refashion the program into a vital initiative that honours the historical tradition, renews relations with the McLuhan community, and embarks on a far-reaching, progressive mission worthy of the tradition’s inherent value.

The Self-Study documents this journey, detailing the rationale and process of creating an encompassing Coach House Institute, documenting the projects that were conducted to enable U.of.T to stand proud through five years of international activities celebrating a number of McLuhan anniversaries, and—most importantly—describing a sustained suite of exploratory and experimental actions that were undertaken to develop a vision for the Coach House and McLuhan Program that might enable it, in the next 50 years, of having an influence comparable to that which McLuhan had, 50 years ago.

The mandate and mission resulting from these extensive consultations builds on three sources:

1. McLuhan’s provocative inquiries, almost half a century ago, regarding the reciprocal intersection of culture and technology, especially as regards media, information, communication, and the coming of what came to be known as the “Information Age”;


2. A proposal to develop a “Skunkworks for the Future University,” mandated to explore, debate, probe, experiment, understand and imagine the future of learning, knowing, thinking, and communicating, in light of the transformation of the material substrates of expression and creativity from marks on paper to digital configurations; and

3. A widespread sensibility encountered among all those consulted—students, faculty, artists, civic leaders, and external stakeholders—that the heart and soul of serious inquiry and reflective debate stand in need of substantial, restorative nourishment. The deeply felt sentiment stems from two dialectical juxtaposed facts about our present circumstances. On the one hand, the pace and frenzy of contemporary academic life threatens to eliminate time for slow, deliberative conversation—the very heart of what drew most of us into intellectual life in the first place. On the other hand, it is also being increasingly recognized—by young people, citizens, artists and societal leaders as well as by academics and intellectuals—that digital and informational developments are not only affecting our sociotechnical practices, economic institutions, and patterns of social and cultural life, but also transforming our very sense of being: who we are, what matters, what is going to be significant in the coming age.

Just as opportunities for reflective consideration of ultimate questions recedes, in other words, the need for such conversation and deliberation grows more urgent.

The report documents our efforts to redress a history, forge a vision, and create an institutional platform capable of integrating and addressing these three themes. Resource issues are profoundly challenging, but the report is presented in the confidence that the vision developed merits being turned into reality.
Coach House Institute – Self-Study

Part I • Introduction and Background

Fifty years ago, in a modest but now legendary Coach House on the St. Michael’s campus of the University of Toronto, Herbert Marshall McLuhan gave prescient voice to issues of profound significance for emerging technological society. The provocative probes and prognostications of the most visible member of the Toronto School of Communication have since been widely heralded as having foretold the rise of ubiquitous media and the world-wide web thirty years before they arrived—ultimately leading McLuhan to be dubbed the patron saint of Wired magazine, and prompting Oswyn Murray to suggest that Toronto was "for a brief period the intellectual centre of the world.”

In early 2003, Provost Shirley Neuman and President Robert Birgeneau of the University of Toronto discussed the McLuhan legacy with Brian Cantwell Smith, as part of an exploration about Smith’s moving from Duke University to the University of Toronto (U.of.T) to serve as Dean of the Faculty of Information Studies. Provost Newman in particular was aware of the tremendous latent opportunity that the McLuhan history represented for the University, and of the fact that U.of.T had neither supported nor taken advantage of its long-term potential. In particular, she indicated that the University had a long-term interest in launching an initiative to do justice to the enduring importance of the McLuhan “brand,” something that would serve as emblematic of the long-range vision of the University she was promoting, which is what had garnered Smith’s interest in coming to U.of.T, having to do with the transformation of the academy in virtue of the digital reconfiguration of the material underpinnings of knowledge, learning, communication, creativity, and expression.

The topic of the McLuhan legacy was apropos to the conversation because responsibility for McLuhan’s "Centre in Culture and Technology"—renamed the “McLuhan Program in Culture and Technology” (MPCT) after his death in 1980—had been moved into the Faculty in 1994. In general, the Provost was recruiting Smith in order to enlist his assistance in leading and understanding the digital transformation. She was aware that, as Dean, Smith would assume responsibility for the McLuhan program—for its content and character, for its international visibility, and for stewardship.

2Shirley Newman, Provost, and Robert Birgeneau, President. Prof. Newman assumed leadership of these discussions; she was interested in the McLuhan Program functioning as a “skunkworks” for the future of the university.
3The Faculty was then named the ‘Faculty of Information Science’ (FIS). In 2008, at the end of Smith’s decanal term, it was renamed the “Faculty of Information,” in recognition of the direction and self-conception that the Faculty had undertaken under his leadership. In conjunction with the change in name, the Faculty joined the just then emerging community of “iSchools” (http://www.ischools.org), an organization with ~60 current members.
4Documents recording the move are included in Appendix A.
5Her second reason had to do with concerns with the methodological and disciplinary fragmentation of the academy, a continuing concern that influences many of the CHI/MPCT’s plans.
ship of the McLuhan reputation within U.of.T. She took pains to emphasize not only the potential significance of the opportunity, but also the delicacy and magnitude of what would be required to shift the mandate of the Centre forward by 50 years, in ways that preserved and built on, rather than damaging, its world-wide reputation.

She had reason to be concerned. Though McLuhan is one of most famous personages associated with the University of Toronto, the Centre he founded had a vexed history at the University in the decades following his death, receiving neither prominence nor funding proportional to its visibility and international renown. In spite of its name carrying the word “program,” a U.of.T technical term for a teaching unit, the MPCT had remained largely outside any regular pedagogical program; more generally, its formal status in the University remained somewhat obscure. Derrick de Kerckhove, who ultimately served as the Program’s Director for 25 years (from 1983 until 2008), had succeeded in raising some external funding, for many years had invited “McLuhan Fellows” to U.of.T from around the world, and had done a great deal to maintain the Centre’s external presence. Internationally, the visibility and reputation of the McLuhan name and of his modest Coach House at U.of.T remained highly prominent—growing in visibility over the decades, if anything, as the concept of an “information society” took hold.

The lack of University support, however, was a source of difficulty, with McLuhan himself being differentially viewed within the university, and U.of.T acquiring an increasingly negative external reputation for letting its McLuhan assets languish. McLuhan family members were concerned; a number of McLuhan scholars and aficionados, many with strong media connections (and thus well-positioned to express their views in public) disparaged U.of.T’s stewardship; and, contrary to the best academic principles and wishes of substantial McLuhan scholars, the Coach House began to attract McLuhan devotees—i.e., to serve as a rallying point for people who wanted the MPCT to revere the man, rather than being an institution dedicated to continuing McLuhan’s provocative, prescient study of emerging issues at the intersection of Culture and Technology.

By 2003, therefore, when Smith arrived as Dean, the Faculty of Information Studies had come to face three fundamental challenges, with respect to the McLuhan heritage. All required resolution before it would be possible to launch a powerful, forward-looking initiative:

1. The MPCT, its practices, administrative structure, etc., needed to be regularized, so that it could function appropriately within the increasingly regulated and transparently governed University. Doing this successfully was (and remains) delicate, since McLuhan’s idiosyncratic
style and “out of the box” practices depended in no small part on his Coach House and Centre existing outside regular channels of governance and academic oversight. It was clear, therefore, that any straightforward attempt to regularize the MPCT and bring it under standard practices of governance, quality assurance, and accountability might kill its spirit—rob it of its potential singularity and promise of transformative change. Yet neither could it be left dangling, as peripheral and ambiguous—a perilous situation that risked having it shut down.

The creation of an encompassing Coach House Institute to house the MPCT, and the plans for the CHI/MPCT combination described below, were explicitly developed in order to steer between this organizational Scylla and Charybdis. The CHI was chartered as a U.of.T “extra-departmental unit,” within which the MPCT could function as a program (a strategy that will also allow the CHI to launch other programs, as circumstances and resources permitted). Nevertheless, ensuring operational stability and autonomy for both, with adequate resources (both money and dedicated time) to enable them to achieve their respective mandates, remains a substantial ongoing challenge.

2. Relations with the “McLuhan community”—primarily outside of U.of.T, and including the family, but also in the city, across Canada, and internationally—had to be renewed. Fortunately, the period from 2008–2014 presented an opportunity during which to undertake this task. Fortuitously, as described below (§II.B.2), the five-year period from 2010–2014 included five significant McLuhan anniversaries—of his birth, of his death, of the launch of his Centre, and of his two major books. Each on its own, but especially the combination, were celebrated around the world in something of a dispersed five-year international McLuhan festival.

In 2008, when the CHI was launched (following Smith’s completion of his tenure as Dean), it was clear to both Smith and Dominique Scheffel-Dunand, whom Smith appointed as Director of the MPCT, that the five-year anniversary period would see intense international attention focused on U.of.T. Absent a major renewal initiative, the years of neglect and lurking resentment were likely to boil over during this period, earning the University significantly bad press on a world-wide scale—not just damaging its future ability to build on the brand’s illustrious past, but more widely tarring the University’s international reputation.

The CHI/MPCT leadership therefore chose to exploit the period—working visibly through the programs and events documented below, but also in the background, with numerous conversations and consultations with members of the McLuhan family and community—to reverse this downhill slide. The process involved listening and probing, exploring new directions, conducting experiments, and in general working collaboratively with local, national, and international scholars and artists with an interest in a renewal of the Centre’s mandate. The aim was not only to redress past behaviour and refurbish U.of.T’s reputation, but—more substantively—to shift the tone of the conversation, and prepare the ground for a positive forward-looking alternative.

3. A vision for the CHI/MPCT had to be developed—one worthy of the name and the history, not mired in retrospective adulation, and catalytic of a future for irreverent excellence at the periphery of the university. An emerging vision designed to meet these requirements is pre-

⁶See §I.A, and Appendix E.
sented in Part III, below—a mandate designed to provide the University with the ability to look askance, ask unorthodox questions, probe the adequacy of current understanding, and in general trouble accepted intellectual wisdom.

Overall, the focus remains on culture and technology, but for reasons explored below, moves beyond the topics of media and communication that are so often associated with McLuhan’s own work—topics that, though invisible in McLuhan’s day, are now so visible and ably shouldered by colleagues worldwide that establishing a U.of.T focus on them at this point was not judged to be the most daring, disruptive, and significant direction in which to dedicate a forward-looking CHI/MPCT. Though continuing to consider informational, computational, and digital technologies, the envisaged content of the CHI/MPCT is being cast wider. One theme, to be explored in conjunction with the iSchool, of tremendous significance to the academy generally, has to do the reciprocal impact of information and digitality on contemporary an epistemic issue—knowledge, learning, expression, and engagement. Another, also explored below, has to do with (a renewed sense) of foundations and fundamentals—asking both what principles, commitments, and sensibilities undergird the digital transformation, and how ‘digital’ and ‘informational’ developments are affecting our understanding of the world at the deepest level. Consideration may also be given to other efforts to “mechanize” our engagement with the world, including neuroscience, cyborgian extensions of the human, etc.

The most important guiding principle, however, is not to focus on these developments per se, or indeed on anything already recognized as worthy of attention, but to maintain an unswerving focus on that which matters most—about the human, about culture, etc.—and to consider its fate in an increasingly technologized age. One might summarize this approach to issues of profound social, technological, and cultural change in a simple cross-cutting question: “What Will Matter Then?”

Throughout, the guiding aim has been to maximize the CHI/MPCT’s chance of doing something, today, that in 50 years will be regarded as having had a decisive, long-range impact as McLuhan’s own ideas did, 50 years ago.

The reports documents CHI/MPCT efforts, through the review period, to address these three challenges. What is reported has been accomplished with modest resources (in particular: with no administrative support, teaching relief, reduction in other service responsibilities, or postdoctoral fellows). Funding now needs to be attracted to enable the vision to be realized. As discussed in §II.F.1, this presents a formidable challenge, in no small part because, for reasons to be discussed, it is highly unlikely that funding can be secured through traditional peer-reviewed channels for a proposal that is sufficiently daring and significant to be worthy of the opportunity that the McLuhan legacy represents. An initiative has been launched to explore the possibility of securing private funding, but far more work remains to be able to turn the ideas presented here into concrete reality.

In spite of these challenges, however, we are confident that the three questions have been dealt with successfully. A great deal has been accomplished in the past seven years, preparing the CHI/MPCT to assume a position of international significance.
I • A — 2004–08: Launch of the Coach House Institute

In the spring of 2003, as part of the recruitment process, Smith drafted a “thought-piece” on the place and role for a U.of.T Faculty of Information Studies (included as Appendix B). In brief, the idea it bruited was that what would become iSchools had neither a distinguishing subject matter nor a distinguishing methodology—and thus failed to meet the normal conditions on the integrity of a University structural entity. Instead, Smith argued, they should view themselves as “Skunkworks for a Future University.” The term ‘skunkworks’ is industry jargon for a practice institutions will employ to explore radical or discontinuous aspects of its future: select groups of employees are broken out into “advance teams,” located in a partially-separated space where they are insulated from influence by reigning norms and practices that are almost inevitably hard to break free from, and charged with exploring new ways of doing things that will transform the way the main business operates. New products may be part of it, but new practices and processes—sometimes, processes enabled or facilitated by new products—are frequently part of the story.

The idea was that, rather than being individuated by topic or method (in the manner traditional to academic units), information schools should be *individuated temporally*: understood as a University’s “advance party,” sent 10 or 20 years into the future—either to scout out the territory, bring back news, routes, maps, insight, local knowledge, or perhaps to set up camp and “domesticate” the new territory, which will be occupied by the university as a whole, when it arrives, complete with all its supplies, personnel, and paraphernalia, years down the road.

This originating “skunkworks” vision for iSchools played a critical role in the subsequent development of the CHI. In the 7-year strategic plan developed for the Faculty soon after he arrived at U.of.T in the fall of 2003, Smith included a section discussing a proposed “McLuhan Centre”—designed to be a “major site to host leading-edge considerations of the technological implications of the Information Age” (relevant sections of the Academic Plan are included as Appendix C). In 2005, a specific proposal for such a centre, under the title “The McLuhan School,” was submitted to the University’s Academic Initiative Fund (AIF)—a university-wide initiative calling for proposals to establish breakthrough, cross-cutting programs going beyond traditional academic programs. The proposal (included in Appendix D) described the School as “an interdivisional, interdisciplinary site to coordinate teaching and research activities focusing on how information practices are being transformed by developments in media, computing, and other material information substrates.” With endorsement by central University administration, the proposal was approved, garnering 3 years of university funding (2005–08) at a level of $200,000 per year.

Though its overall conception was sound, the scope of the AIF proposal was wildly unrealistic—partly in light of the level of funding awarded, but also because it envisaged structural reconfigurations that were impossible within the then-reigning U.of.T culture. Prospects for configuring the iSchool in its terms were small, given the increasingly strict normative governance of public universities in Canada, were substantially reduced when Provost Neuman stepped down in 2004, and then rendered even more remote upon the inauguration of a University-wide “resource-centered management” (RCM) budget model in 2007.

Smith’s response to these developments was fundamental to the subsequent emergence of the CHI/MPCT. In response to the institutional strictures that prevented the implementation of such a radical vision for the Faculty, he moved to:
1. Incorporate into the Faculty’s own academic plans those initiatives of the proposed McLuhan School that could be achieved: (i) within the pedagogical programs of the existing Faculty and research portfolios of its faculty members, and (ii) within the Faculty’s normal processes of program governance (in particular, as applicable to courses and degrees). This included its first 5 recommended initiatives: “Curating Knowledge,” “Strategic Information Management,” “Health Informatics,” “Information Preparedness in 2010,” and “Open Source | Open Access.”

2. Defer to the proposed reinigorated MPCT those aims and commitments of the proposal that reached beyond the Faculty’s own compass—including in particular the two sections “Ultimate Questions in the Information Age,” and “Changes in the Intellectual Landscape.”

Included in the discussion of these two categories were a variety of specific issues and questions, which are not per se what matters most, though, interestingly enough, virtually all of them were mentioned in the extensive consultations that followed (Part III). The critical fact was that there was natural fit between: (i) the “out-of-the-box” thinking, provocative and exploratory style, and irreverent but far-reaching vision of culture and technology exemplified in McLuhan’s own history and the future potential of the MPCT program; and (ii) the far-reaching issues imagined as being explored in an academic skunkworks. The synergy was intensified by the fact that the transformation that the skunkworks was to imagine exactly involved the consequence of the kind of information and media revolution that McLuhan had imagined.

It was natural, therefore, to imagine a combination of theses vision might form an axis around which a future CHI/MPCT might coalesce.

For two reasons, it was impossible at the time of these developments (mid 2000s) for these ideas to be brought to immediate fruition. First, the regularization and renewal tasks identified above needed to be addressed and resolved. Second, pursuing them required substantial academic commitment to their realization, at a time when the Dean decanal responsibilities prevented active work on any such renewed McLuhan Centre.

In 2008, therefore, at the end of his first term, Smith stepped down from his decanal position, and established a new “Coach House Institute,” designed to serve as home for the MPCT, and as a site that could take on, in a manner worthy of the importance of the legacy and brand, a renewed investment of issues of profound importance in an information culture. The CHI was initially launched as an extra-departmental unit (EDU) of type D, establishable by act of the Dean. On Sept. 12, 2009, Dean Seamus Ross submitted a proposal to convert it to an EDU of type C, requiring approval of the iSchool’s Faculty Council. The proposal was unanimously approved by Council on Feb. 23, 2010. The constitution of the CHI as and EDU:C included the establishment of a CHI Executive Committee, whose current members are:

7The health informatics initiative resulted in a joint program (and faculty hire) between the Faculty of Information and the U.of.T. Dept. of Health Policy, Management, and Evaluation (HPME).
8Sections ‘B·1’ through ‘B·5’ in the “McLuhan School” proposal (Appendix D).
9‘B·6’ and ‘B·7’ in the proposal.
10The name was chosen in part to index the McLuhan history and legacy, to serve as a recognizable context for the McLuhan Program in Culture and Technology, but also to sidestep some difficult issues, at the time, involving allergy to the name, insistence that the MPCT be an honorific site, etc.
11The original proposal, the proposal to constitute it as an EDU of type C, and the minutes of the Faculty Council granting approval, are included in Appendix E.
It should be noted that the name “Coach House” was chosen not only to index the iconic site of McLuhan’s legacy and transformative work, but also—in accord with the vision of an academic skunkworks—to suggest an academic analogue of the legendary “garages” in Silicon Valley and elsewhere, renowned for hosting, in modest quarters, the initial exploration and developments of transformative social change. It was also imagined, from the outset, that the name “Coach House” might ultimately become a common noun, rather than a proper name—the idea being that, if the initiative was successful, other universities (and perhaps other types of institution as well) might establish their own contrapuntal, provocative, and generative “Coach Houses.”

I • B — Since 2008

In preparation for such a future, the primary emphasis of the U.of.T CHI and MPCT, since 2008, has been targeted at the three challenges identified above.

Numerous conferences, artistic performances, workshops, and other events were mounted (detailed below). Many but not all were in celebration of the various McLuhan anniversaries. They involved consultations with senior scholars, young faculty members and students, with artists and civic leaders and other outside the university. National and international scholars have been awarded McLuhan fellowships (including Marshall McLuhan Centenary Fellowships, a program launched in 2012–13); and postdoctoral fellows trained. All involved explicitly-designed processes of exploring, listening, experimenting, and envisioning, in order to assemble the materials out of which we could forge a powerful future for the combined initiative. On the pedagogical side, links were established with existing iSchool degree programs and courses; a major pedagogical initiative was also enjoined to develop a new “Culture and Technology” concentration within the Faculty of Information’s master’s of information (MI) degree, brought to Faculty governance in 2012–13, and launched in the fall semester of 2013. Links were also established with, and students involved from, allied programs at the University, including the “Communication, Culture and Information Technology” (CCIT) program at the University of Toronto at Mississauga (UTM), the “Book and Media Studies” program at St. Michael’s College (where the Coach House itself is located), and

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12In keeping with the envisaged “contrapuntal” nature of the CHI/MPCT, the C&T concentrations was “handed over” from the CHI/MPCT to the Faculty of Information, to fit into its regular course and degrees structures.
with the Cognitive Science Program within the U.of.T Faculty of Arts and Science.

The last year has seen two specific foci: (i) on assembling the results of the extensive five-year consultation process, through an “envisioning” exercise, in order to formulate a mandate responsible to the input from all the consulted communities that is sufficient to carry the CHI through its next ten years; and (ii) on launching efforts to raise funds, with an eye towards a potential endowment. These activities have been undertaken in conjunction with informal meetings and collaborations with other universities, city programs, and artists.

At the time of this writing we believe all three goals have been met: establishing a workable formal structure, securing the requisite Faculty endorsement necessary to commit to very high aims, and completely turning around the external situation and refurbishing U.of.T’s reputation—all to the point that the wider community is now looking forward to U.of.T to lead the McLuhan legacy forward. In sum, the CHI/MPCT has completed the first stage of its redevelopment, en route to nourishing transformative, long-range, unfettered conversations about culture and technology.

**Part II • Record of Activities**

**II · A — Up to 2008**

A number of activities undertaken up to and including 2008 were relevant to the subsequent formation of the CHI.

As part of the transformation and regularization of the MPCT, Smith established an MPCT executive committee in 2005,\(^1\) charged with reviewing MPCT practices so as to conform with U.of.T policies and governance, planning activities to renew the Program’s intellectual substance and integrate it more fully with the iSchool and U.of.T. Smith and Dominique Scheffel-Dunand (Prof of French at York Univ, and soon thereafter to be named Director of the MPCT) also worked with numerous pre-2008 McLuhan fellows\(^1\) to host activities and events that would accomplish some of these same aims. A notable example was the 2005 summer lecture series on “Information Literacy in a Multi-Media Age,” tying a number of McLuhan issues into topics central to the academic mission of the iSchool, where it was held (further details in §B.3.a, below, and in Appendix F).

During May 2008, just prior to the formation of the CHI, a major international conference on “The Future of Objectivity” was held at U.of.T, sponsored by the (nascent) Coach House Institute,\(^2\) consisting of: (i) Derrick de Kerckhove—Director of the MPCT and Prof of French at U.of.T; (ii) Michael Edmunds—Director, Information Commons, U.of.T. (and former student of McLuhan); (iii) Donald Gillies—Prof. of Communications, Ryerson Univ., and ex-Director of the Joint Program in Communication and Culture (COMCULT) at Ryerson and York Universities; (iv) Dominique Scheffel-Dunand—Prof of French, York University (who would be named Director of the MPCT at the completion of Prof. de Kerckhove’s term in 2008); and (v) Brian Cantwell Smith—Dean of the Faculty (Chair). Regularization and planning efforts over the next three years were discussed and implemented by the Dean in conjunction with this Committee—especially with Prof. Scheffel-Dunand.

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\(^1\)Created on April 17, 2005, upon receipt of the news that the “McLuhan School” AIF proposal had been approved for funding by the U.of.T Provost, consisting of: (i) Derrick de Kerckhove—Director of the MPCT and Prof of French at U.of.T; (ii) Michael Edmunds—Director, Information Commons, U.of.T. (and former student of McLuhan); (iii) Donald Gillies—Prof. of Communications, Ryerson Univ., and ex-Director of the Joint Program in Communication and Culture (COMCULT) at Ryerson and York Universities; (iv) Dominique Scheffel-Dunand—Prof of French, York University (who would be named Director of the MPCT at the completion of Prof. de Kerckhove’s term in 2008); and (v) Brian Cantwell Smith—Dean of the Faculty (Chair). Regularization and planning efforts over the next three years were discussed and implemented by the Dean in conjunction with this Committee—especially with Prof. Scheffel-Dunand.

\(^2\)Discussions of MPCT status, direction, plans, etc., were extensively discussed, both informally and in formal meetings, with the McLuhan Fellows appointed during this period, including, among others, Michael Andreas, Gianluca Baccanico, Maria Anna Calamia, Edgar Gómez Cruz, Mark Federman, Reto Geiser, Twyla Gibson, Carolyn Guertin, Less Jeffrey, Takeshi Kadobayashi, Maria Luisa Malerba, Aniko Meszaros, Francesco Monico, Sibylle Moserm, Stuart J. Murray, Jason Nolan, Norman Steinhart, Serena Tommasino, Ana Viseu, and Bernadette Wegenstein.
with co-sponsorship by SSHRC (which contributed $49,999), the Faculty of Information Studies, and the Ontario College of Art and Design (details are included in Appendix G). The conference combined plenary sessions with eight internationally-renowned scholars with a program of peer-reviewed submitted papers. Some aims of the conference was to draw in eminent world-thinkers to address an issue of the sort to which the CHI would address itself; and also to introduce them to the idea of a revitalized MPCT and the Coach House Institute itself, which was described in the opening remarks.

II · B — McLuhan Anniversaries and Celebrations

Many of the CHI/MPCT activities and initiatives undertaken since 2008 were organized so as to mesh with five McLuhan anniversaries, each of which received international attention:

- **2010** — 30th anniversary of McLuhan’s death.
- **2011** — 100th anniversary of McLuhan’s birth.
- **2012** — 50th anniversary of the publication of *The Gutenberg Galaxy*
- **2013** — 50th anniversary of the opening of U.of.T’s McLuhan Centre for Culture & Technology
- **2014** — 50th anniversary of the publication of *Understanding Media.*

World-wide, a tremendous range of activities were organized to celebrate these commemorations. As noted above, by 2008–09 it was clear that Toronto and the U.of.T would inevitably come under internationally scrutiny, as millions of eyes focused on McLuhan’s history, on the University where he worked, on his vaunted Centre for Technology and Culture, and on the contextualizing Toronto School of Communication. We realized that it was the responsibility for the MPCT and CHI to present an accurate accounting of the story of the McLuhan Centre and Program, both during McLuhan’s life and since 1963.

II. B.1 — 30th anniversary

CHI/MPCT plans to renew and reinvigorate the Program were made public in May 2010, in conjunction with the 30th anniversary of McLuhan’s death. In recognition of the depth of his artistic commitment, World-wide, a tremendous range of activities were organized to celebrate these commemorations.

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15The Government of Canada’s Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) is the major funder of social science and humanities research in Canada.

16Bruno Latour (Sciences Po, Paris), Rebecca Kukla (U. of South Florida), Mark Lance (Georgetown), Joe Rouse (Wesleyan), Adrian Cussins (U. Nacional, Bogota), Adrian Lowe (Factum Arte), Karan Barad (UC Santa Cruz), and Lucy Suchman (Lancaster), Bruno Latour (Sciences Po, Paris), Sara Diamond (President, Ontario College of Art & Design), and Diane Borsato (Guelph).
and his influence beyond the walls of the academy, three art exhibits were commissioned by the MPCT, in partnership with the Scotiabank CONTACT Photography Festival. The three exhibits were the three Primary Exhibits of “CONTACT 2010: Pervasive Influence.”

1. Through The Vanishing Point—an award-winning artistic installation by David Rokeby, pioneering electronic, video and installation artist, and Lewis Kaye, sound artist and professor at Wilfred Laurier University. Mounted within the space of the Coach House, and viewable from through windows from the outside, the piece used multiple projections, semi-transparent scrims and the space itself to map archival video and photographs onto their actual physical position, rendered dynamic through the use of collage and medieval spatial representations. Held at the Coach House in 2010, and subsequently at MaRS and the Canadian Cultural Centres in Berlin and Paris in 2011.

2. The Brothel Without Walls—exhibited from 29 April to 29 May 2010 at the University of Toronto’s Art Centre (UTAC), was curated by iSchool and UTAC faculty member Matt Brower and CONTACT Festival Artistic Director Bonnie Rubenstein. The show presented works of 9 Canadian and international photographers that gave form, through a McLuhan lens, to the cultural role of photography in relation to our general media culture, and more specifically television and the internet.

3. The Mechanical Bride—May 1 through June 10, 2010, an exhibit at the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art (MOCCA) honouring McLuhan’s 1951 book The Mechanical Bride, the show exhibited works by Canadian and international artists revealing vital connections between mass media, advertising, painting and photography, and exploring the social and cultural affect of images and their emotional and political implications. Featured were the works of John Armstrong & Paul Collins, Dana Claxton, Kota Ezawa, Jaqueline Hassink, David LaChapelle, Ryan McGinley, Josephine Meckseper, Matt Siber, Alec Soth and Britta Thie.

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17David Rockeby was also winner of the Governor General’s Award in 2002.
18At Wilfred Laurier Lewis Kaye taught intellectual property and digital culture, the relationship between technology and aesthetics in electronic media art, the political economy of communication, and the history and development of communication and cultural policy in Canada.
20At the Canadian Cultural Embassy in Berlin until July 8, and from September 27 through mid-November at the Canadian Cultural Centre in Paris. See http://www.davidrokeby.com/vanishing.html.
21The exhibition included works by Susan Anderson (USA), Maria Gadonneix (France), Joachim Schmid (Germany), Clunie Reid (UK), Jessica Dimmock (USA), Evan Baden (USA), Stefan Ruiz (USA), Christopher Wahl (Canada), and Douglas Coupland (Canada; Coupland’s Marshall McLuhan: You Know Nothing of My Work! appeared in 2010 as well).
II.B.2 — 100th anniversary

A larger effort was dedicated to the following year’s Centennial anniversary of McLuhan’s birth. The MPCT’s first step was to conceive and implement a collective effort labeled McLuhan100—a collaboration among U.of.T’s MPCT, the City of Toronto Economic Development and Culture Division, and Mozilla, struck on July 14, 2010 at Toronto’s City Hall. Under the stewardship of David Naylor, President of the U.of.T and Honorary Patron of the McLuhan Centenary, the McLuhan100 initiative was co-chaired by Paul Hoffert, Dominique Scheffel-Dunand, Mark Surman and B. W. Powe. The group worked to showcase and exploit the innovative powers of Toronto’s cultural and digital sectors to deliver a year highlighted by one hundred McLuhan activities, and to instigate an ongoing McLuhan-based initiative (i.e., the CHI/MPCT) that, in form as well as content, would exemplify McLuhan’s edgy, enduring, and ultimately world-defining spirit. The committee provided input on McLuhan-related projects, events and conferences and helped foster strategic partnerships with private sector, media and potential funders. With support from U.of.T in the amount of $180,000, consisting of a catalytic gift from the Provost of $90,000, matched by an additional $90,000 from the iSchool, McLuhan100 enjoyed substantial success in its fundraising efforts, raising in 2011 alone an additional $370,000.

More than two dozen events were organized and mounted as part of the Mc100 year. In the interests of space, summaries and descriptions are collected in Appendix H. Highlights on some of the year’s academic conferences, artistic exhibits, and participatory events included:

1. **McLuhan100: Then | Now | Next: International Conference**, a major conference organized and hosted by the MPCT to close the McLuhan100 celebratory year, combining artistic and academic presentations showcasing leading and emerging artists and intellectuals in a provocative discourse on the cultural implications of the digital future. The conference involved more than 100 speakers, more than 25 “point-counterpoint” sessions, and more than 300 “artefacts, outerings, utterings.” It presented esteemed experts from all walks of communications, the arts, cultural and media studies and civic ecology and served as a place for players big and small to connect and plot the future of digital media and its effect on culture, all the while blurring the boundaries between academe, culture and digital media.

2. The **DEW Line Festival**, involving: indoor and outdoor media art installations in galleries and public spaces in Toronto; a John Cage Concert at Gallery 345; an art and poetry mash up at the Gladstone Hotel; “Piazza McLuhan,” sponsored and co-presented by the Italian Cultural Institute; and a “Climate Is Culture” concert at Koerner Hall, the finale event of the year, co-hosted by McLuhan100, CBC “The Signal’s” Laurie Brown, and the Cape Farewell Foundation;

3. A McLuhan **audio walking tour**, narrated by CBC’s Sparks host Nora Young, launched during Jane’s Walk on May 7/8, 2011, to emphasize McLuhan’s physical legacy as it relates to locations in Toronto and the University of Toronto.

4. Two **commemorative heritage plaques** to honour McLuhan, at 29 Wells Hill Ave. (where he and his family lived) and at St. Michael’s College (where he worked).

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10. Programs to animate targeted legacies, including a **capital campaign** to restore the Coach House, McLuhan’s renowned seminar room;

11. Special exhibitions by major artists in galleries throughout the city and in Europe; and

12. Numerous other McLuhan 100 events, including:
   
a. **Nuit Blanche**, in collaboration with Barbara Fischer, Director of the Justina M. Barnicke Gallery, showing “Everything That Is Solid Melts into Air (2008) by Mark Boulos”, an art piece borrowing its title from a sentence from the *Communist Manifesto*.

b. **Doors Open Toronto**, a city-wide celebration of Toronto’s built form held May 28–29, 2011, during which more than 450 visitors visited the McLuhan Coach House.

c. **Scotiabank contact Photography Festival**, from May 5–29, 2011, during which the Coach House presented Robert Bean’s *Illuminated Manuscripts*, which, using photo-documentary and conceptual narrative approaches to image making, examined figure and ground as metaphor, allegory, composition and probe. (The exhibit drew more than 800 visitors.)

d. **MaRS’ Net Change Week**, Through the Vanishing Point, the Rockeby/Kaye exhibit described above § II.B.1) was exhibited in a specially designed space at MaRS, and launched at a special McLuhan 100 reception, on June 6, 2011, as the signature installation for MaRS’ Net Change Week.

e. A McLuhan sidebar event at **The International Festival of Authors** at Toronto’s Harbourfront Centre, engaging such McLuhanesque themes as *The Future of the Author, The Future of Publishing*, and the *Role of the Author in the Future*. Feature authors included Bruce Mau, Clay Shirky, Brooke Gladstone and Douglas Coupland.

f. The launch of the “**Marshall McLuhan Students Choice Award**” at the TARA awards at TIFF Bell Lightbox, in honour of 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.’ The award was given by Scheffel-Dunand, Director of the MPCT, to Wil Noack, the Ryerson School of Media (RTA) student who had best contributed to the betterment of the RTA community as voted by his/her peers.

13. **Substantial media coverage**, (in print and online).

Programming and marketing McLuhan 100 was a multiply-directed exercise. It was an effort to animate a series of backwards and forward-looking legacies, involving not only the MPCT, but also the U.of.T as a whole, the Faculty of Information (iSchool), the CHI, and a variety of concomitant programs. It allowed the MPCT to develop partnerships with major media, arts and cultural institutions and organizations in Toronto. It awarded a series of commissions with programming support from McLuhan 100, to amplify its own considerable marketing and outreach campaign. And it aimed to strengthen and develop Canadian-European relations, particularly in the context of art, communications, and technology.25

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25While the focus of activity for McLuhan 100 was in Toronto and Canada over the course of the year, select European
The initiatives were all designed to be exciting, and catalytic—shot through with provocative intellectual and artistic themes evocative of McLuhan’s dash and fervor. Though some projects were U.of.T.-specific; many others were collaborative with other GTA academic institutions (such as York, Ryerson, and OCADU), or carried out jointly with the City of Toronto and GTA and artistic institutions. Proposed activities were designed to meet, in various degrees, a number of criteria we considered essential to moving the overall CHI/MPCT initiative forward: (i) fun, provocative, exploratory, and inexpensive—“askance” to accepted ways of viewing; (ii) collaborative, Involving the city, other GTA educational institutions, the public sector (museums, archives, etc.), private partnerships, open-source and other web-based networks (e.g., the Mozilla foundation), etc.; and excellent, to help dismantle any lingering worries that the irreverent style for which the MPCT is known is at odds with a mandate for the future of the program to be of uncompromised rigour and depth.

The events were also designed to be diachronic—partly in the sense of looking backwards, to honour the anniversaries and pick up on audience expectations, but to parlay that initial orientation into a one of keeping on-going temporal progression in view, so that the energy from the historical occasion could be parlayed and transformed in progressive, forwards-directed momentum. In particular, the activities (including in particular the major McLuhan100 conference) were organized around a tripartite imaginary:

1. **Then:** Associated with the historical McLuhan legacy—focusing especially on public memory and oral history, catalyzing, preserving, and reconstructing diverse constituent memories of the social, artistic and intellectual networks that constituted the McLuhan phenomenon, exploring such questions as: why, what, and how we remember; and

2. **Now:** Provocative events that, in “McLuhanesque” style, considered the state of contemporary society, particularly as regards the mutual imbrication of culture and technology; and

3. **Next:** Forward-looking events, aiming—in line with the developing CHI/MPCT vision—to bring the best elements of the McLuhan tradition forward in ways that amplify and complement the University’s and City’s sense of the future of the academy, the city, and the networked world.

**II.B.3 — 50th anniversaries**

Though not as extensive as those mounted for the 100th and 30th anniversaries, significant events were organized to celebrate the three 50th anniversaries—especially, in 2013, of the Centre for Culture and Technology.27 The 2013 event was particularly significant as it focused on the Coach House itself, which had served as McLuhan’s office in the English Department at St. Michael’s College, and which, over time, had acquired legendary iconic status as “home” of his radical and penetrating observations. As well as honoring the building’s history, the 2013 event gave the CHI/MPCT a chance to present the newly-developing CHI initiative to legacy stakeholders.

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26Ontario College of Art and Design University.
27The Centre was originally established on October 24, 1963 by Claude T. Bissell, President of the University of Toronto, and John Kelly, President of St. Michael’s College.
The festivities opened, on Oct 23, 2013 with a panel, moderated by Domenico Pietropaolo, Principal of St. Michael’s College (McLuhan’s college at U.of.T, on the campus of which the Coach House sits), of reminiscences and histories from all the directors, since McLuhan’s passing, who had led the MPCT: (i) David Olson; (ii) Francesco Guardiani; (iii) Derrick de Kerckhove; and (iv) Dominique Scheffel-Dunand. On Oct. 24, a 50th anniversary conference was presented to an overflow audience at the Coach House. Following introductory words of greeting from Michael and Eric McLuhan, the conference featured keynote addresses from Dominique Wolton (Director, Institut des sciences de la communication du CNRS28; and Directeur, Hermès, CNRS éditions, Paris), Eric McLuhan (Marshall’s son and co-author of Laws of Media: The New Science29), and Brian Cantwell Smith (Director of the CHI). In his talk, entitled “Mechanisms of Enchantment,” Smith discussed future plans for the CHI and McLuhan legacy at U.of.T.

Additional events to celebrate the 50th anniversaries included:

1. Culminating a long-term effort initiated at the beginning of the anniversary years, in July 2013 the Fisher Rare Book Library at U.of.T acquired McLuhan’s working library, comprising more than 6,000 volumes, more than half of which heavily annotated by McLuhan. 30 Though not opened to the public until 2014, a private viewing of the library was made arranged for anniversary celebrants.

2. A permanent exhibit was launched at the Coach House, entitled “All Media Work Us Over Completely,” linking the CHI with the McLuhan personal library described above. The exhibit, held on Oct. 23, 2013 and curated by doctoral student Chris Young, presents McLuhan’s interaction with literary texts, and his insights on the authors’ concepts inscribed on the pages.

3. The launch of a new Culture & Technology concentration in the Master’s of Information degree program of the iSchool (described in further in §II.D, below).

4. The launch of the inaugural Culture and Technology Lecture Series, a year-long graduate student-led initiative to bring international scholars to Toronto to engage in CHI/MPCT issues with the iSchool and wider U.of.T and GTA communities (described in more detail in §II.C.3).

In addition, in 2014, in conjunction with the Fifteenth Annual Convention of the Media Ecology Association (MEA),31 held June 19-22, 2014, at Ryerson University, the CHI hosted a public forum and performance entitled Lines of Thought” on June 20, 2014. The aim of the event was to invite innova-

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28Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (National Centre for Scientific Research), the largest governmental research organisation in France and largest basic science agency in Europe.
29The etiology of this book is telling with respect to McLuhan’s reception in the academy, and germane to the future of the CHI/MPCT. McLuhan’s unorthodox methods led to his being severely criticized for not developing an analysis that could be recognized within the traditional academy as a “theory” (with testable, non-obvious claims, etc.). As betrayed by its title, Laws of Media: The New Science aimed to counter that charge, though given his defensive of exploratory “probes,” interventionist questioning, etc., it seems doubtful that Marshall McLuhan would have endorsed anything close to the classical model.
30http://fisher.library.utoronto.ca/mcluhan-library
http://www.ischool.utoronto.ca/content/lecturecelebration-fisher-library-acquisition-marshall-mcluhan-personal-library
https://fisher.library.utoronto.ca/sites/fisher.library.utoronto.ca/files/mcluhan_library_jan2014.pdf

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tive researchers, entrepreneurs, public thinkers and artists to the CHI to exchange and discuss perspectives on our rapidly changing digital world with those enunciated by McLuhan 50 years earlier.

II.B.4 — Informal meetings and connections

Almost as important to the renewal efforts and initiatives to repair U.of.T’s worldwide reputation as the official anniversary events described above were informal discussions with the family, stakeholders, and community of international McLuhan scholars, and the participation of the MPCT in other international events.

This effort was led by Prof. Scheffel-Dunand, who worked tirelessly over the five-year period to nourish collaboration, ease tensions, repair relationships, and convey the message that U.of.T is interested in providing positive leadership of the MPCT going forward. The task required considerable diplomacy, in order to garner support for the CHI/MPCT continuing the spirit of McLuhan’s provocative investigation of issues of cultural gravity, rather than following the path pursued in so many McLuhan programs around the world, which focus on McLuhan’s own work and legacy. In our judgment the situation has been almost wholly turned around, providing us with an opportunity of moving forward progressively without foundering on past allergies and resentments.

In addition, it is essential to acknowledge the substantial support and background work of Dean Seamus Ross that was critical to the success of these celebratory years, and that continues to provide a foundation for the possibility of the CHI/MPCT’s continuing emergence. Dean Seamus has delivered numerous speeches, made formal and informal introductions, and worked diligently (both in public and in the background) with St. Michael’s College, the McLuhan family, prior MPCT Directors, and a number of U.of.T faculty members, to restore relations between and among the iSchool, the University—including with several previous U.of.T Provosts. He has also established and maintained relations with U.of.T’s President (David Naylor and then Meric Gertler), Vice President of Advancement David Palmer, and has established supportive links with other faculties, such as the Faculty of Music and the Communication Culture and Information Technology Program (CCIT) at the Univ. of Toronto, Mississauga. He hired an advancement officer at the iSchool who continues to work with the CHI/MPCT on fundraising and possible endowments, and more generally has and continues to support the visions, plans, and visibility of the CHI/MPCT.

II.B.5 — Summary

In sum, through a wide range of projects, and with consultations and contributions from a large variety of different constituencies, the CHI/MPCT was able to use the anniversary years to nourish the McLuhan legacy, refurbish the University’s reputation, and renew U.of.T’s commitment to move the spirit of the McLuhan tradition forward. The projects:

1. Allowed artists, academics, Toronto citizens, international visitors, and young people to travel from “Then” to “Now,” and from “There” to “everywhere”—a continuum of space and time that reconfigured the world in which we now all live;

2. Animated the city, U.of.T, and the iSchool with archival videos, photographs, conversations and academic debates that took place throughout this history—shifting fluidly from literal to dynamic representations of culture & technology, through events that:
a. Mapped archival images onto actual physical city spaces—at events such as Nuit Blanche, Doors Open, Jane’s Walk, and art exhibits in such museums and galleries as the U.of.T Art Centre, the Canadian Museum of Contemporary Art, the Justina M. Barnicke Gallery, the CBC Spark show with Nora Young, etc.;

b. Convened academic conversations on culture & technology covering the flux of ideas and the interpersonal interactions that charged the atmosphere of McLuhan’s legendary Monday night seminars.

3. Collaborated with Toronto’s cultural and technology communities in projects that revived McLuhan’s spirit and enhanced his legacy, burnishing Toronto’s reputation as a place of cultural and intellectual innovation; and

4. Showcased the diverse resources embedded in public memory and oral history, and in informal social, artistic and intellectual networks, and how they can be powerful drivers of the design and development of emerging information technologies, digital media, and social re-configuration.

Perhaps even more importantly, these activities were motivated by a broader goal: of understanding how, by studying this 50-year history, the current CHI/MPCT leadership could gain insights into how to forge an equally prescient, provocative, consequential project for the next 50 years. In aid of this ambition, three explicit goals were adopted in the design of all CHI/MPCT anniversary activities, even those that ostensibly were “backwards looking” to McLuhan’s time:

1. To broaden the discussion to include the intellectual, historical, organizational, and spatial context in which McLuhan worked, with an eye to understanding which of its properties, and what other contextual factors, need to be nourished, retained or reinvented, if we are to catalyze on-going developments of comparable impact;

2. To comprehend the role of informal research alliances and “think tanks” by deepening our understanding of the Toronto School of Communication (TSC) in particular—how it was formed, what circumstances helped catalyze the conversations that took place during its era, how the TSC mattered for its members, etc.\(^{32}\)

3. To ask how and why thinkers such as McLuhan, Innis and other members of the TSC were important for society in their day, and to understand how, in present times, it would be possible to nourish thinkers of comparable importance;

4. To learn, including from those who were present in McLuhan’s era, how the modesty of the Coach House as a place, and the nature of McLuhan’s “under the radar” practices (including his electrifying but highly non-standard “Monday night seminars”) played a role in subsequent developments—the extent to which it mattered that McLuhan and his program remained marginal and suspect within the academic community, and how those facts impinged on the spread of his ideas around the world.\(^{33}\)

\(^{32}\)Cf. Rita Watson and Menahem Blondheim (ed.), *The Toronto School of Communication Theory: Interpretations, Extensions, Applications*, published by the University of Toronto Press & the Hebrew University Magnes Press, Jerusalem in 2007, under the auspices of the Halbert Centre for Canadian Studies of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Israel Association for Canadian Studies.

\(^{33}\)As David Rokeby noted in developing the exhibit *Through the Vanishing Point*, the Coach House remains “in many ways
As many scholars have noted, McLuhan and the TSC prefigured the rise of multidisciplinarity and the methodologically diverse character of the contemporary university. Learning how that came to pass has helped illuminate how a revitalized CHI/MPCT can help move the structure of academic and intellectual discourse forward in years to come.

II · C — Other Activities

Over the review period, in addition to those (i) targeted at the three major goals of regularization, renewal, and envisioning, and (ii) developed in conjunction with the five-years of McLuhan anniversaries, the CHI/MPCT hosted a small of number of other lectures series and individual events. Four of these additional activities numbers of people or lecturers; an additional set were individual lectures, speakers, visitors, etc. Four of those involving numbers of people are described here:

II.C.1 — Information Literacy in a Multi-Media Age

As noted above, in the summer of 2005 the MPCT presented a series of public lectures entitled The McLuhan Lectures: A Series on Information Literacy in a Multi-Media Age.” The series, organized by McLuhan fellow Twyla Gibson and co-hosted by the iSchool’s Prof. Wendy Duff, featured a dozen talks by faculty members, postdoctoral fellows, and artists from the GTA and Ottawa):

2. Donald Carveth (Prof. of Sociology, Emeritus, York Univ.)
3. Marcel Danesi (Prof. of Semiotics and Linguistic Anthropology, Univ. of Toronto)
4. Mark Engstrom (Senior Curator, Deputy Director of Collections & Research, and Interim Director, Royal Ontario Museum)
5. Tony Hushion (Vice President, Exhibits, Programs & New Media Resources, Royal Ontario Museum) and David Palmer (President and Executive Director, ROM Board of Governors, and Vice President, Advancement, U.of.T)
6. Lilly Koltun (Director General, Portrait Gallery, Library and Archives Canada)
7. Janine Marchessault (Prof., Dept of Film, and Canada Research Chair, Art, Digital Media and Globalization, York University)
8. David Moos (former Curator of Contemporary Art, Art Gallery of Ontario)
9. Alexandra Palmer (Senior Curator, Royal Ontario Museum, and Adj. Prof. of Art History, York Univ.)
10. Dominique Scheffel-Dunand (Director, MPCT, and Faculty of French, York Univ.)
11. Brian Cantwell Smith (Dean, Faculty of Information, Univ. of Toronto).
12. Monique Tschofen (Assoc. Prof. of English, Ryerson Univ.);

II.C.2 — Future of Objectivity Conference

On May 23–25, 2005, with co-sponsorship from SSHRC, the iSchool, and the Ontario College of Art and Design (OCAD), the CHI held an international conference entitled “Reclaiming the World: The Future of Objectivity.” The intent of the conference was to investigate one way in an intellectual gravity well, to this day attracting scholars and artists across a range of disciplines and from around the world.”
which our epistemology and epistemic values are being changed by contemporary intellectual and socio-technical developments. The conference, garnering an attendance of approximately 500, consisted of contributed papers as well as a keynote and seven internationally renowned speakers, each of which was followed by a prepared commentary and questions, prior to an open question and answer period. The invited speakers included (commentators, contributed paper authors, paper titles, etc., are included in Appendix G):

1. Bruno Latour (Prof. of philosophy, anthropology, and sociology at Sciences Po, Paris, and Centennial Professor at the London School of Economics)—Keynote
2. Karan Barad (Prof. of Feminist Studies, Univ. California, Santa Cruz)
3. Adrian Cussins (Prof. of Philosophy & Cognitive Science, Univ. Nacional Bogota, Colombia)
4. Sara Diamond (President, Ontario College of Arts and Design) & Diane Borsato (Assoc. Professor of Studio Art, Guelph Univ.)
5. Rebecca Kukla (Prof. of Philosophy, Univ. of South Florida) and Mark Lance (Prof. of Philosophy, Georgetown Univ.)
6. Adam Lowe (Founder and CEO, Factum Arte, Madrid)
7. Joe Rouse (Prof. of Philosophy, Wesleyan Univ.)
8. Lucy Suchman (Prof. of Anthropology of Science and Technology, Lancaster Univ.)

II.C.3 — Culture and Technology Lecture Series

The Culture and Technology Lecture Series was a graduate-student led initiative, with assistance from the CHI/MPCT, to bring international scholars to Toronto to engage in CHI/MPCT issues with the iSchool and wider U.of.T and GTA communities. The series ran from Oct 2013 through April 2014. As presenting a public lecture, each scholar was asked to send a paper in advance for discussion in a graduate-student seminar. Invited speakers included:

1. Pieter Adriaans (Prof. Machine Learning/Artificial Intelligence, U. of Amsterdam)
2. Sandra Braman (Prof. of Communication, Univ. of Wisconsin-Milwaukee)
3. Jenna Burrell (Assoc. Professor, School of Information, UC Berkeley)
4. Bernd Frohmann (Prof. Emeritus, Fac. of Information Studies, U. of Western Ontario)
5. Sandy Pearlman (Dean’s Visiting Prof. for Interdisciplinary Innovation, and Visiting Professor at McGill University).
6. Brian Cantwell Smith (U.of.T.)
7. Dominique Wolton (Director, Institut des sciences de la communication du CNRS34; and Directeur, Hermès, CNRS éditions, Paris)

II.C.4 — Marshall McLuhan Fellowships (Philippines)

Every year, in a joint program established in 1997 between the MPCT and the Canadian Embassy in the Philippines, a Marshall McLuhan Fellowship is awarded to a Philippine recipient embodying outstanding qualities in the field of investigative journalism.

34Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (National Centre for Scientific Research), the largest governmental research organisation in France and largest basic science agency in Europe.
Assisted by the Manila-based Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility (CMFR), the Canadian Embassy chooses a Filipino journalist whose work has contributed to positive changes in the social arena or at least has raised the level of public discourse in a relevant issue usually concerning governance and human rights. The recipient cross Canada giving lectures, including one at the iSchool organized by the CHI/MPCT, in conjunction with the Canadian Journalists for Freedom of Expression (CJFE). Details on the award and its recipients are included in Appendix J; over the course of the review, they included:

1. 2008 — Glenda Gloria • Engaging the Philippine Media with New Technology
2. 2009 — Diosa Labiste • Celebrity Politics and the Politics of Fame
3. 2010 — Ed Lingao • Shooting the Messenger: The Maguindanao Massacre and the Phenomenon of Media Killings in the Philippines
4. 2011 — Carolyn Arguillas • In Perpetual Peril: The Culture and Practice of Community Journalism in the Philippines
7. 2014 — Cheche Lazaro • Ethics and Accountability in the Changing Media Landscape in the Philippines

II.C.5 — Individual events

Some additional events presented by the CHI/MPCT include:

1. “We, the City...” — A Nuit Blanche event at the Coach House on Oct 4-5, 2008, exploring Toronto’s distinctive ways of merging and blurring languages, cultures and identities. Throughout the event, live video links to Nuit Blanche celebrations in Paris and Brussels were projected onto the outside walls of the Coach House. The Toronto activities included three successive two-hour events:35

Panelists included:
1. Brian Cantwell Smith, Director, CHI and Former Dean, Faculty of Information, U.of.T.
2. Derrick de Kerckhove, Former Director, MPCT, and Professor, French Studies, U.of.T.
3. Dominique Scheffel-Dunand, Director, MPCT; Assoc. Prof., French Studies, York Univ.; Research Associate, CURL, Osgoode Hall Law School, York Univ.
4. Peer Zumbansen, Assoc. Dean Research & Internal Affairs; Director, Collaborative Urban Research Laboratory (CURL), Osgoode Hall Law School, York Univ.
5. Eric McLuhan, Independent Scholar
6. Ilse Treuernicht, Chief Executive Officer, MaRS Centre, Toronto
7. Bill Hutchinson, Chair, Board, Waterfront Toronto
8. Alejandro Jadad, Chief Innovator & Founder, Centre for Global eHealth Innovation, U.of.T.
9. Daniel Drache, Prof., Political Sciences & Associate Director, Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies, York Univ.
10. Ramin Jahanbegloo, Research Fellow, Centre for Ethics, & Massey College Scholar-at-risk, U.of.T.
11. Bryan Davis, Founder and director, Kaieteur Institute For Knowledge Management
12. Danielle Allen, LLB Candidate, CURL Research Associate, Osgoode Hall Law School, York Univ.
13. Amar Bhatia, Doctoral candidate, Faculty of Law, UoT; CURL Research Associate, York Univ.
14. Teresa Ascencio, Media Artist, Toronto
a. A “local global theatre,” in which intellectuals, artists, activists, journalists and entrepreneurs were asked to complete the sentence: “We, the City…”, followed by a panel discussion and public questions;

b. “The Shape of our Voices”—in which vocal cues generated by event participants and attendees were translated into graphical, musical and gestural artistic forms; and

Prior to the Nuit Blanche evening event, a tribute dinner for Derrick de Kerckhove was held to celebrate and honour his 25 years as Director of the MPCT.

2. **Monday night seminars:** On Nov 28, 2011, the CHI/MPCT resumed the McLuhan’s legendary Monday Night Seminar Series. The initial session, entitled “The Edge, Metaphors of Being”. Discussants: (i) Seamus Ross (Dean and Professor, Faculty of Information; (ii) Lisa Steele and Kim Tomczak (Visual Studies Program Univ. of Toronto and cofounders of Media Arts Centre Vtape); and (iii) Paolo Granata (University of Bologna, McLuhan Centenary Visiting Fellow, University of Toronto); with probe Martin Boyd (Translation studies, Glendon College, York University).

3. An iSchool “iTea” was held on October 14, 2009, to talk with the iSchool community about the new conceptions of the MPCT and CHI.

4. **Lines of Thought:** (June 20, 2014) A public forum presented during the 2014 Media Ecology Association (MEA) in Toronto, as part of a celebration of the 50th anniversary of McLuhan’s iconic text *Understanding Media*. Participants were encouraged to probe the phenomenon of ‘Technopoly,’ a term coined by Neil Postman.36

**II · D — Teaching**

The CHI/MPCT offered a number of individual iSchool courses focused on McLuhan’s writings and the philosophy of information—see especially the descriptions in Appendix K on the special offering of “**Minds, Media & Society I**” in the winter term of 2012–2013, which focused on McLuhan’s most important formative works, and on “**Philosophy of Information**,” offered in the win-

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36Curated by John Oswald (Concept & Direction) & Dominique Scheffel-Dunand, the event featured presentations by:

1. Sandra Braman (Author of Change of State: Information, Policy, and Power & Poet);
2. Liz Dowdswell (Thought leader & practitioner in international development);
3. Arsineh Hanesian (Armenian-Canadian actress and producer);
4. Derrick de Kerckhove (McLuhan translator and scholar & Professor);
5. Abdul Khan (Global leader in Information & Communication for Development);
6. Joshua Meyrowitz (Author of No Sense of Place & Professor, Univ. of New Hampshire);
7. David Nostbakken (Media entrepreneur & McLuhan Centenary Fellow);
8. John Oswald (Media artist & Composer)
9. Sandy Pearlman (Music producer and creator, Professor, McGill Univ., and McLuhan Centenary Fellow);
10. Greg Power (Public Relations & Communications Professional);
11. David Rokey (Artist in Visual and video art); and
12. Dominique Scheffel-Dunand (Director, McLuhan Program in Culture & Technology & Professor, York Univ.)
ter of 2007, in conjunction with the Philosophy Dept.

The major pedagogical effort of the CHI/MPCT during the review period, however, was the development of a **Culture & Technology (C&T) concentration** with the iSchool’s Master’s of Information (MI) degree. Founded on two new core courses, the concentration was launched in September, 2012. The effort was conducted as part of the overall “regularization” goal, in order to support Culture & Technology as a central subject within the iSchool’s curriculum.

The aim of the Culture & Technology concentration is to examine how society, culture, and our understanding of the human condition both influence, and are influenced by, ongoing and impending technological development. Building on the positive results that the iSchool and U.of.T gained during the anniversary period, the concentration is intended to deepen and bring to a new generation of students the long-standing U.of.T tradition of exploring the intersection of scientific, technological, social, and cultural issues—a tradition represented not only by McLuhan, but by such other notable U.of.T intellectuals as Harold Innis and Ursula Franklin.

Abbreviated descriptions for the two core courses are as follows:

1. **INF1501**: An introduction to some of the methods and traditions used to identify, understand, analyze, investigate, critique issues, and intervene in the culture-technology nexus. Particular emphasis on **information** technologies: computing, information systems and services, digital technologies, the internet, social media, etc. Affiliated with the McLuhan Program in Culture & Technology, a program of the Coach House Institute (CHI).

2. **INF1502**: In-depth exploration of **student-selected issues** at the intersection of culture and technology, using philosophical, critical, and methodological skills, knowledge, and techniques developed in INF1501H. Each student will (i) identify a topic within C&T on which they have educational and/or professional background, and (ii) explore the socio-technical consequences of that issue’s transformation in virtue of the development of computing, digital technologies, and information systems, services, and practices.

Details on the concentration are provided in Appendix K, including course syllabi, concentration requirements, approval documents, etc.

### II · E — People

#### II.E.1 — Pre-2008

Prior to 2008, the current CHI/MPCT leadership worked with two groups of people associated with the MPCT as it existed under the leadership of Derrick de Kerckhove to plan future structural organization and substantive content for the Program. The primary outcome of these deliberations were the establishment of the CHI in 2008, and a commitment to broaden the mandate (including the public perception of the mandate) of the program to return it to *Culture and Technology*—McLuhan’s own conception of his subject matter—rather than more narrowly being conceived as about communications and/or media studies.

The first group was the **MPCT Executive Committee**, established in 2005, consisting of:

1. Derrick de Kerckhove—Director of the MPCT and Prof of French at U.of.T;
2. Michael Edmunds—Director, Information Commons, U.of.T (and former McLuhan student);
3. Donald Gillies—Prof. of Communications, Ryerson Univ., and ex-Director of the Joint Program in Communication and Culture (COMCULT) at Ryerson and York Universities;
4. Dominique Scheffel-Dunand—Prof. of French Studies/Linguistics, York Univ.; and
5. Brian Cantwell Smith—Dean, Faculty of Information.

In addition, two McLuhan Fellows from the de Kerchhove period of the MPCT played especially important roles in helping to chart a future for the CHI/MPCT:

1. Liss Jeffrey—well known McLuhan scholar (passed away Dec. 16, 2008, six months after the launch of the CHI).
2. Twyla Gibson—in addition to being a McLuhan Fellow, given a 25% Assistant Professor appointment in the iSchool from 2006–2008.

II.E.2 — McLuhan Centenary Visiting Fellowships

Following the centenary celebrations in 2011, the previous program of unpaid McLuhan Fellows, primarily awarded to students, were converted to McLuhan Centenary Visiting Fellowships, to be awarded to internationally recognized academics, with each recipient received $10,000 over the course of their residency at the University of Toronto.

Five Centenary Visiting Fellowships were awarded in 2011–12, and two in 2014–15:

1. Dimitris Ginosatis—Lecturer in Philosophy & Media Aesthetics, Athens School of Fine Arts.
2. Paolo Granata—Prof. of Cultural Heritage, U. of Bologna and Bologna Academy of Fine Arts
3. Stephen Kline—Professor in the School of Communication and the Director of Media Analysis Laboratory, Simon Fraser University
4. Eric McLuhan—Co-author, with his father Marshall McLuhan of: (i) Laws of Media: The New Science; (ii) Theories of Communication; and (iii) Media and Formal Cause
5. Daniel Robinson—Associate Professor and Rogers Chair in Media Studies, Univ. of Western Ontario.

Two McLuhan Centenary Visiting Fellowships were awarded for 2014–2015:

6. David Nostbakken—Canadian Strategist and Entrepreneur
7. Sandy Pearlman—Producer, songwriter, creator, manager, poet, theorist, and former record company executive.

Plans for 2015–16 involve extending David Nostbakken’ McLuhan Centenary Fellowship, renewing a fellowship for Paolo Granata, and awarding four additional fellowship awards to:

8. Rasmus Grenfeldt Winther—Assoc. Prof. of Philosophy, UC Santa Cruz
9. John Oswald—Composer
10. Henry Thompson—Prof. of Web Informatics, Univ. of Edinburgh

II.E.3 — Postdoctoral Fellows and Students

The CHI/MPCT has hosted five postdoctoral fellows, engaged numerous master’s and doctoral students at the iSchool, and hosted a number of visitors during the past seven years. Postdoctoral fellows include:

2. Alexander Klein (2007–08)—PhD in Philosophy from the Univ. of Indiana; subsequently Mellon Fellow in the Philosophy Dept. at Cornell Univ.; currently Asst. Prof. of Philosophy at UC Long Beach.

3. Bonnie Mak (2007–08)—PhD in Medieval Studies, University of Notre Dame; currently Assoc. Prof. of Information Science, Univ. of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.


Students have also been involved in Coach House and MPCT activities, most notably including:

1. Graduate
   a. Peter Coppin (PhD, iSchool, 2013)
   b. Sandra Danilovic (PhD, iSchool, current)
      a. Kevin Eldred (PhD, Philosophy Dept, 2010)
      b. Antonio Gamba-Bari (PhD, iSchool, current)
      c. Brian Griffin (PhD, iSchool, current)
      d. Elysia Guzik (PhD, iSchool, current)
   e. Alexandra Hall (Master, 2012)
   f. Asen Ivanov (PhD, iSchool, current)
   g. Jenna Jacobson (PhD, iSchool, current)
   h. Adam Pugen (PhD, iSchool, current)
   i. Hervé Saint-Louis (PhD, iSchool, current)
   j. Chris Young (PhD, iSchool, current)

2. Undergraduate
   a. Hussam Kaka (Computer Science)
   b. Leo Trottier (b.a., Cognitive Science, 2005)
   c. Nancy Zhao (b.a., Cognitive Science, 2009)

Full-year CHI/MPCT visitors have included

1. Haruki Ito (2013–14; Assoc. Prof., College of Economics, Kanto Gakuin University, China)

2. Jennifer Esmail (2008–09; English Dept., Rutgers Univ.)

3. Zhiwei Yu (2008–09; PhD fellowship from the Chinese government)

II • F — Resources

II.F.1 — Financial

Since April 30, 2008, the CHI/MPCT has not had an official line-item budget. On May 1 of that year, the Provost agreed that the $200,000 obtained from the Academic Initiative Fund (AIF) in
2005 (§IA, above) should be rolled into the Faculty’s base operating funds, in order that CHI support would continue on a permanent basis.\(^{38}\) Because of this, on Nov. 18, 2008, Smith requested from Acting Dean Jens-Erik Mai that the full extent of the AIF funds be allocated to the CHI, but no legal document exists that officially “targets” those funds towards the CHI/MPCT.

Nevertheless, in the intervening 7 years Dean Seamus Ross has been generous in supporting the CHI/MPCT. Among other things, he: (i) has provided a stipend for MPCT Director Dominique Scheffel-Dunand; (ii) supported the McLuhan Centennial Fellows; (iii) provided support for significant events, including $50,000 for the CONTACT photography festival in 2010, and $90,000 (to match the Provost’s contribution) for the anniversary celebrations in 2011. Nevertheless, support for other events, such as the Future of Objectivity conference, other McLuhan anniversary celebrations, etc., has been raised from external sources. Two external solicitations of funds were of particular importance:

1. $50,000 from SSHRC for the 2008 “Future of Objectivity” conference;
2. Of $550,000 raised for the year of McLuhan100 events, $180,000 was from U.of.T:
   a. $90,000 · Seed funds from the U.of.T Provost, in recognition of the event’s significance for the University, as a basis on which to secure additional funding
   b. $90,000 · Matching funds from the Faculty of Information (iSchool)

An additional $370,000 was raised from external sources:

   c. $50,000 · SSHRC, for the McLuhan100 THEN | NOW | NEXT and DEW Line Festival.
   d. $100,000 · Ontario Cultural Attractions Fund
   e. $150,000 · “Celebrate Ontario” Blockbuster Tourism Fund;
   f. $50,000 · City of Toronto’s Economic Development and Culture division;
   g. $9,000 · Ryerson Univ. for McLuhan100 THEN | NOW | NEXT and DEW Line Festival.
   h. $2,000 · York Univ. for McLuhan100 THEN | NOW | NEXT and DEW Line Festival.
   i. 9,000 · Additional contributors

Extensive additional in-kind, media and venue contributions were obtained, to ensure that McLuhan100 celebrations extended far beyond the campus.\(^{39}\)

It is worth noting that, in addition to these events, a major infrastructure grant was submitted in February 2008 to the Canadian Foundation for Innovation (CFI) under their 2009 “New Initiatives Fund” (NIF). The proposal—included in Appendix L—was selected by U.of.T from a university-wide competition, was sent to CFI with the University’s endorsement, and received extremely positive reviews from external assessors. “Fully satisfied” that it met all selection criteria, the reviewers in-

\(^{38}\)The rollover was arranged to take place before the permanent allocation to the Faculty from the University’s “University Fund” was established. Even though these funds currently reside “in the Faculty’s base budget,” it is not the case that if they are directed to the CHI now, they are being taken from what would otherwise have gone to the Faculty itself. On the contrary, had the CHI not existed, the Faculty would receive $200,000 less in funding each year than in fact it does.

\(^{39}\)Partners included: Mozilla (Firefox), CBC Radio, MaRS, Toronto Public Library, DigitalJournal, the French Consulate in Toronto and the Italian Cultural Institute in Toronto, the U.S. Embassy to Canada, the Canadian Embassy in Paris, the Goethe Institute, Grano, Scotiabank CONTACT Photography Festival, the National Film Board of Canada, Nuit Blanche, OneStop Media, Pattison Digital Advertising, the International Festival of Authors, the Gladstone Hotel, the Treehouse Group, TINARS (This Is Not a Reading Series), Cape Farewell North America, Circuit Gallery, Pattison-OneStop Digital Media, Gallery 345, Justina M. Barnicke Gallery, the Centre For Social Innovation and many, many others.
cluded such laudatory comments as:40

1. “The committee was unanimous in judging this proposal as excellent, inspirational, and vi-
   sionary.”
2. “The committee was impressed by the stellar achievements of the PI as a senior academic, as
   a research team leader, and as an academic administrator at various prestigious universities
   and research institutes. The committee was convinced that the PI had the right combination
   of team leadership skills—as well as expertise in technological (i.e. computer and informa-
   tion science) as well as philosophical matters—to create a world-class think-tank devoted
   to considerations of digital media.”
3. The Coach House “would go a long way to bolstering the University of Toronto’s interests
   in positioning itself once again as a major international centre for research into culture and
   technology—broadly understood”

Ultimately, however, the proposal was not successful. Needless to say, we recognize that funding
environments are highly competitive, and that it is inevitable that good proposals fail to garner fund-
ing. We were nevertheless by the marked discrepancy between the reviewers’ assessment, and the
agency’s action, made explicit in CFI’s summary statement:

   “Unlike the expert committee, which was globally positive on the basis of the potential of this
   proposal to attract symposia and create a think-tank environment, the MAC [Multidiscipli-
   nary Assessment Committee] was not convinced that the proposed activities were inno-
   vative or that the infrastructure requested was essential.” [emphasis added]

Statements such as this (and other experiences we have had) contribute to a widely-held sense that
Canadian peer-review processes are challenged by radically multi-disciplinary approaches of the sort
to which the CHI/MPCT is committed. It is partly for such reasons that the fund-raising efforts de-
scribed below (§III.F) are targeting external and private sources.

II.F.2 — Computational Infrastructure

The CHI/MPCT is currently equipped with a number of iMacs, monitors, printers, etc., all of which
Smith acquired in conjunction with the Canada Research Chair (CRC) he obtained upon coming to
U.of.T in 2003. The majority of this equipment is still functional, but it is all now more than 13
years old, and in need of renewal.41 A U.of.T WiFi router has been installed, and the small building
does have ethernet wiring. Some years ago Smith purchased a portable digital projector with his
own funds, which is used for CHI/MPCT events. The building is not set up for webcasting or vide-
 oconferencing; nor does it have any speakerphones. A webservers and NAS42 were acquired in
2004 (also as part of Smith’s CRC), but they too are out of date, and their software has not been
updated, so neither is currently operational.

40Reactions from the Ontario Research Fund Adjudication Panel were similar: (i ) “The McLuhan Coach House, revived
and reinvented for the digital age, can make the university a global intellectual center to explore the cultural impacts of
emerging digital media technologies;” and (ii) Housing the CHI in a revamped McLuhan Coach House is “powerful” and
“a way to assert, or reassert, Canada’s role in thought leadership on communications.”
41The printers are still adequately functional. The computers, however, can no longer be updated to run current soft-
ware, reducing their security and ability to be used to share documents with others, etc.
42Networked attached storage—net-accessible hard disk storage, for purposes of backup and archiving.
Renewal of computational infrastructure should be undertaken together with work on refurbishing the building itself, below.

II.F.3 — Building

By the mid 2000s, the “physical plant” of the Coach House had deteriorated to the point that there was some discussion by University Facilities Management as to whether it remained safely occupiable. It was also woefully underequipped, lacking both adequate heating and air conditioning. In the spring of 2012, using “capital improvement funds” that the Faculty of Information had obtained in conjunction with the Province’s expansion of graduate education, a renewal effort was undertaken, which involved a complete interior repainting, new carpets, new windows, installation of heating and AC, etc.43 In addition, a large amount of discarded papers, accumulated debris, and so on, was cleaned out (with the Archives faculty of the iSchool involved in sorting things first, so that anything of value and/or associated with McLuhan himself could be preserved). The end result of this process is that, though some of the “charm” of the original site had to be sacrificed, the space is now functional, heated/cooled, and safe.44

Renovation funds in the amount of approx. $400,000 remain available, held by the University to be used as a potential “match” for external donors. In addition, a number of the items originally requested for the renovation45 were not included in the first stage of renovation, a number of aspects of the building remain non- or marginally functional,46 and some of the furniture purchased for the CHI was not moved to the CHI from 45 Wilcocks, instead being sent to Bissell.

In sum, while we are very grateful that the Coach House was refurbished to the point of being functional, it remains a significant distance away from being renewed to the point where U.of.T could be proud of it, as a space of significance historical, cultural, and architectural value. Fundraising for the CHI/MPCT depicted in the next section, therefore, should include raising capital funds adequate to make the building a place worthy of its legacy and future potential.

One additional event, conducted as part of the McLuhan100 events, bears on the building. On Oct. 24, 2011, the CHI held a full-day Design Charrette, in which members of the university, including the iSchool Dean and CHI/MPCT leadership, worked with four major Toronto architectural firms, to envision what it would be to construct a significant new building, large enough to house not only the CHI/MPCT but also the full Faculty of Information, and also to serve as a “Toronto destination” to honour the McLuhan legacy. The design firms included:

1. Diamond Schmitt (which has designed a number of celebrated new U.of.T buildings)
2. Bruce Mao Design
3. IBI Group
4. Williams & Shawn

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43The roof had been repaired a number of years earlier, to stop leaks from doing more permanent damage.
44 From 2008 to 2010, the iSchool, having expanded beyond its allocated space in the Bissell Building, was temporarily assigned expansion space in a building adjacent to the Coach House at 60 Wellesley St. W. Due to the intrusion of sound from its other occupants (the remaining space had been assigned to the Music Dept. as practice space), the “overflow” of the iSchool was moved from 60 Wellesley St. to 45 Wilcocks St (part of New College) in 2010. For those years CHI and MPCT activities were allocated a collection of offices in the overflow space.
45This Renovation Request is included as Appendix M.
46See the “Status Report”, also in Appendix M.
The envisaged projects were not small; one involved two towers, one of which was to be 25 storeys; another imagined a 60-story complex that included not only the CHI and iSchool, but other media centres, plus upper floors of residences.

II • G — Summary

In sum, the CHI/MPCT currently does not have a stable source of funds, its iconic building is functional but needs major attention in order for it to serve as the international beacon it deserves to be, and its infrastructure needs a major upgrading. We believe we have developed a potent forward-looking vision for the next ten years, but resources are a critical priority—both fund-raising and dedicated time to make the vision reality.

Part III • The Future

III • A — Overview

Much of the activity of the CHI/MPCT over 2014–15 has been dedicated to planning and envisioning an appropriate future for the Institute/Program, capable of meeting the high mandate set by the Provost at the outset (in 2003).

The vision articulated below has arisen from the extensive consultations held over the last five years—formal meetings, public workshops, artistic events, course discussions, and individual conversations with student, academic, civic, corporate, and institutional interest in a renewed Coach House and MPCT. Students and young people have been a special priority, as the emerging leaders and inhabitants of present, impending, and future culture.

Without exception, five key messages came through from every constituency:

1. Developing a powerful CHI/MPCT around a strong, forward-looking vision is of enormous importance—to U.of.T., to Toronto, to Canada, and to the larger global village. Moreover, the time is right, following on the celebrations anniversary celebrations, to make an ambitious move—bravely, decisively, and with far-reaching vision.

2. Within the overall subject matter of Culture & Technology, the focus should be on what matters as society undergoes a digital and informational transformation, and as so many of our values, assumptions, institutions, social structures, senses of identity, and cultural practices are on imperceptibly but inexorably shifting sands. Strikingly, this focus was recommended as an alternative to focusing on digital and informational socio-technical practices themselves. What was requested, that is, was not so much an opportunity to interrogate digitality or communication or media or information—important tasks that are being undertaken elsewhere—but the chance to deliberate on the existential and epistemological consequences of these developments: what is happening to us, who we are and want to be, how we will learn and change and exist and matter, in a world drenched in these engulfing changes.

47If the $200,000 currently in the base budget were officially designated for CHI/MPCT operations, that would go a long way towards giving it an “operational base” (Stage I in the planning process; cf. §III.A.), enabling it not only to carry out enough programming to make it noteworthy, but also to build up the sorts of programs that would be able to attract more significant funding.
3. **Autonomy** is key—requiring the CHI/MPCT to be “in but not of” the University,⁴⁸ so as (i) to be intensely engaged with, bring benefit to, and benefit from, the academic/intellectual environment on whose periphery it exists, especially including the most intensely inquiring minds; while (ii) avoiding being hobbled by bureaucratic structures and limiting imaginations; and (iii) being able to collaborate—on local, national, and intellectual levels—with artists, the city, young people, and other institutions (including other universities).

4. The CHI/MPCT should be a “**Safe House for (Unsafe) Ideas**”—a place that invites questions, nourishes irreverent and provocative ideas, supports radical exploration, and listens. It was ubiquitously noted that, ironically but tragically, it is increasingly difficult, in the frenzy and pace of the contemporary academy, to get to what ought to be the heart of intellectual inquiry—slow, unpressured time and space for unfettered inquiry into profound issues of social gravity. What would make the CHI/MPCT stand out—and matter—would be for it to be an oasis for quiet, collective listening, probing, wondering, and inquiry, rather than the presentation and “pushing” of opinions, views, and research results.

5. To make any of the above matter, the CHI/MPCT must embrace **uncompromising excellence**—no matter how otherwise irreverent, exploratory, poetic, or “out of the box” its methods, substance, and institutional form.

Other themes received widespread support. One, especially strongly endorsed by members of the potential funding community, was that the agenda and institution **not be incremental**—not be “yet another interdisciplinary academic research centre.” Given the uniqueness of the opportunity, we should **aim high**, everyone said, with guts and gusto, and imagine into existence something genuinely novel—something with the potential to have the level of influence that McLuhan’s own work had 50 years ago.

Another theme endorsed by many discussants had to do with the value, in addition to rational (especially academic) inquiry, of embracing **artistic insight** and **poetic discovery**. The need to support the tacit and ineffable, values and aesthetics, spiritual quests and artistic insight. While it is premature, today, to speculate on what the present era will (retrospectively) be recognized as having contributed to understanding, we were struck by how much support we encountered for widening the scope of inquiry to include issues, topics, and concerns beyond compass of so much of contemporary science and social science research. It was in part these issues that undergirded the interest mentioned above in taking an existential approach: embracing 1st and 2nd person perspectives, both singular and plural, rather than merely adding to existing 3rd person accounts, no matter how critical, post-structuralist, or politically aware.

To make good on forging a CHI/MPCT capable of meeting this mandate, we envisage three stages of development:

1. **Stage 1**: An adequate **Operational Basis**, with sufficient funding and resources to enable:
   
   a. CHI/MPCT must finalize and inaugurate plans for Stage 2, which will require dedicated time, administrative and technical support. This raises issues of scale. If U.of.T is to “make good” on its McLuhan heritage—not just exploit ‘McLuhan’ as a brand, but bring

⁴⁸Perhaps on the model of Massey College: [http://www.masseycollege.ca](http://www.masseycollege.ca)
the power and consequence of the entire Toronto School of Communication forward into comparably important 21st century inquiries into digitality and information—the initiative must be supported with dedicated leadership and management. What has been accomplished over the past five years is all that can be accomplished by faculty members on top of other full-time teaching, research, and service obligations.

b. Major funding and development efforts must be undertaken—for capital development, program endowment, etc. (e.g., funding for the Fellows initiative imagined below for Stage 2, or similar long-term programming); and
c. An initial series of workshops, seminars, retreats, roundtables, etc., need to be held, to begin to bring the CHI/MPCT mandate to public attention.

The most straightforward way to accomplish these goals would be: (a) to provide relief from competing teaching and service obligations for CHI/MPCT leadership; (b) to designate the $200,000 base funding acquired in conjunction with the McLuhan School proposal to the CHI/MPCT; and (iii) to initiate a major project with University Advancement and with potential external and private donors to garner long-term funding.

2. Stage 2: A vigorous, visible, on-going program—involving research, teaching, workshops, retreats, etc. One possibility would be to establish an elite McLuhan Society of Fellows, somewhat on the model of Harvard’s and Michigan’s, with an associated world-class “Junior Fellows Program” of individuals at an early stage of their career of exceptional ability (“of the highest calibre of intellectual achievement”), originality, and resourcefulness. While not structurally innovative per se, an appropriately tuned version could be of international reputation and prominence (see Figure 4, on the following page).

5. Stage 3: A high-level structured Public Discourse Program on issues deemed to be of relevance, gravity, and pertinence to the CHI/MPCT’s general commitments of investigating “What Will Matter Most,” involving dynamic international panels or seminar, to bring a body of thought or development of insights on a critical issue into the public sphere. One possible analogy is the Council of Canadian Academies, where panels of internationally preëminent scholars and experts are brought together to investigate an issue and develop a collectively-authored public assessment.

Beyond Stage 3, or perhaps in order to facilitate it, one can imagine a capital campaign to build a building—perhaps a “Culture and Technology” Centre, including a Communication Museum, to be

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49Perhaps more than!
50Note that documents included in Appendix A, recording the move of the McLuhan Program into the Faculty of Information in 1994, specify the Directorship of the McLuhan Program as a half-time academic position, and state that “In addition, there will be one full-time administrative staff position. Half of this position will be designated for secretarial and accounting work; the other half will be for maintaining the video conferencing facilities.”
51Note that the proposal to establish the CHI as an EDU of type C (included in Appendix E.2), approved by Faculty Council on Feb 23, 2010, stated that “the CHI will be funded through base funding originally deriving from the 2005 ‘McLuhan School’ AIF award” (emphasis added).
52Teaching could take the form of courses, provided that they weren’t unduly restricted. For example, the proposed Junior Fellows might offer compelling seminars or undergraduate courses on their thematic topics.
53Perhaps on the model of the Council of Canadian Academies, or Rockefeller’s Bellagio Center.
54http://www.scienceadvice.ca
55Perhaps on the order of Harvard’s Kennedy Center.
Canada has no fellowship program of the excellence and prestige of Harvard’s “Society of Fellows” and associated “Junior Fellows” program. Awarded to “persons of exceptional ability, originality, and resourcefulness...of the highest calibre of intellectual achievement,” Junior Fellows come to Harvard for 3 years to “pursue their studies in any department of the University, free from formal requirements.” Holding a Junior Fellowship can be “career-establishing”—e.g., by leading directly to a tenured position in a major university in the U.S. or abroad, and functioning as an award for outstanding achievement.

A comparable “McLuhan Society of Fellows” and Junior Fellowship program would honour U.of.T and burnish the brand, to the benefit of Canada as a whole. A number of specific properties would tailor the program to the CHI/MPCT:

1. Each year, a theme would be announced for the next 3 academic years. At steady state, that is, the Institute would support 3 concurrent themes: one each in its 1st, 2nd, and final year.

2. Each year, three Junior Fellows would be selected, in accord with the pre-announced theme. The Fellows would be chosen as a group—from radically different backgrounds and preparations, with a record of collaborative and compassionate spirit, each with a uniquely powerful perspective to bring on the theme. They would come to the Coach House for 3 years, to explore (together, in conjunction with one or more Senior Fellows) a “thematic” issue of social gravity at the intersection of Culture & Technology. In addition to being offered to those who have completed their doctorates, Fellowships would also be offered to artists, poets, etc., of comparable accomplishment and demonstrated ability to collaborate and work across creative boundaries.

3. In conjunction with the Senior Fellows, the Junior Fellows would be asked to organize two Summer Schools, to be held during the 2 intermediate summers of their 3-year tenure. The summer schools—of 2 week’s duration—would provide an opportunity for inventive, inspiring, innovative minds to come together, from around the world, to collectively explore and mull on an issue, within the broad theme, that the Junior Fellows determine to be of relevance, gravity, and pertinence to the CHI/MPCT’s general commitments of investigating “What Will Matter Most.” An analogy is provided by the National Endowment of the Humanities, Whose summer schools often function as the “core locus” of a subfield or extended program of inquiry (the Banff Centre is another point of comparison).

4. In addition to Junior Fellows, (potentially shorter-term) Senior Fellows would be appointed from within the GTA or elsewhere (again, including musicians, poets, artists, etc.). During their tenure, the Junior Fellows might teach courses, run seminars, and catalyze events on their topic of inquiry, to develop interest and expertise across U.of.T and the GTA. Their 1st year would also involve preparation of the 1st summer school; their 2nd, distillation and reviewing of the 1st summer school and preparation of a 2nd, so as to ensure that the 2nd is of even greater power and depth; and the 3rd, coalescing and publishing of the results, insights, queries, concerns, etc. that have came up over the 3 years. Whether the publication would be co-authored or merely co-edited by the Fellows, and how or whether there would be contribution as well by the summer school participants (including its “teachers,” if that role is included), would be determined by the Fellows themselves, in conjunction with the Senior Fellows and CHI/MPCT directors.

a. http://www.socfell.fas.harvard.edu/about.html; see also the roughly comparable program at Michigan (http://societyoffellows.umich.edu).
designed, curated, and managed by the iSchool to serve a multitude of needs: including a practicum initiative, a Toronto tourist attraction, a city/urban studies facility, and in general an historic site for Canada’s leadership in “understanding media.”

Finally, as the process develops and the CHI/MPCT becomes established, links would be developed with inquirers, seekers, deep thinkers, and provocative artists in other locales, with an eye to their developing their own Coach Houses, to serve as contrapuntal sites for reflection, deliberation, inquiry, and unfettered exploration. To put it ambitiously, the ultimate success of this initiative would be for the CHI/MPCT to play a catalytic role in inaugurating a world-wide Coach House Movement—the development of “safe houses” for provocative ideas at educational institutions world-wide.

III • B — Process

The past five years have been conceived as a long, deliberate planning process, consisting of innumerable events, discussions, and individual conversations on how to take the McLuhan legacy forward in a substantial, needed, and significant way. All the events recorded in Part II, that is, were conceived as addressing the third overall goal: of developing a vision for the CHI/MPCT for the next decade and beyond.

Some of these activities were externally directed—to the family, to the international McLuhan community, to artists and musicians and civic leaders. Others arose out of connections with intellectual developments relevant to our information/digital transformation (e.g., the Philosophy of Information course, the “Future of Objectivity” conference, work with the Cognitive Science Program in the Faculty of Arts and Science, strategic meetings at Google’s headquarters in California, etc.). Yet others were targeted towards the iSchool community itself. Major contributions to the emerging thinking came from Fellows invited to the CHI/MPCT over the past seven years. Numerous conversations were also held with the Directors of allied U.of.T programs (e.g., with Anthony Wensley, Director of CCIT at UTM, and Domenico Pietropaolo, Principal of St. Michael’s College, host of the Book and Media Studies [BMS]). Some were with civic leaders and influential members of the Toronto community, such as a planning meeting for the McLuhan 100 organizing committee. And, especially recently, consultations have been initiated with civic, corporate, media and financial leaders and other potential external stakeholders, to determine their interest in (re)establishing a Centre worthy of McLuhan’s heritage and name.

To distill and coalesce the results of these explorations, a number of envisioning meetings were held during 2014–15:

56§II.D.
57 §II.C.2
58E.g., at an invitation-only meeting with Peter Norvig, Google’s Director of Research, on March 31, 2015.
59E.g., see the “iTea” described in §II.C.5.3.
60Including Dimitris Ginosatis, Paolo Granata, Stephen Kline, Daniel Robinson, David Nostbakken, and Sandy Pearlman; see §II.E.2.
61Communication, Culture, and Information Technology, at the University of Toronto at Mississauga (UTM).
62Hosted by Roberto Martella at Grano Restaurant on Nov 15, 2010, featuring presentations by Eric McLuhan, Paul Hoffert, Elena Lamberti, Lilie Zendel, Mark Surman, and others.
63These last consultations have primarily been undertaken by David Nostbakken as part of his Centennial Fellowship; a list of several dozen people that he has met with is given in Appendix O).
1. Jun 20–21, 2014: In conjunction with the Lines of Thought event described above (§II.B.3 §II.C.5), an invitation-only discussion was convened of external stakeholders, particularly persons connected to potential external sources of funding and with experience in comparable initiatives undertaken at other institutions. The aim of the meeting was to garner feedback on an emerging vision, and also to solicit guidance and advice on the sorts of vision and plan that would appeal to potential funders.64

2. Oct. 14, 2014: A consultation meeting was convened of iSchool faculty members, to solicit ideas on a forward-looking vision that would matter to, and integrate with, the research agenda and educational mission of the iSchool.

3. Feb 6–7, 2015: A two-day retreat was held for a dozen members of the iSchool and CHI/MPCT community (6 faculty members and 5 doctoral students), with a targeted mandate of developing a plan, based on the input from prior meetings, of criteria, projects, characteristics, etc., on which we could move forward. (A report on this meeting is included as Appendix N.)

4. Mar 10, 2015: An open meeting on the CHI/MPCT review was held, to which invitations were sent to all members of the iSchool community (faculty, students, and staff).

What follows is a distilled summary of the recommendations that emerged from this series of meetings and consultations. As such, they reflect an emerging consensus within the CHI/MPCT community of a positive direction forward.

III • C — Character

It was agreed that the overall aim of the CHI/MPCT should remain as in the past: to focus on issues involving the reciprocal interaction of culture and technology. A substantive vision in this regard is presented in the following section. But as indicated in §III.A, above, the strongest consensus that emerged—from graduate students and faculty to external stakeholders and potential funders—had to do with the kind of institution that the CHI/MPCT should be, the type of space that people felt was most needed to deal with the contemporary situation. Fundamentally, the aim was for a place of intense but slow collaborative deliberation—contrapuntal to the noise, pressures, and immediacies contemporary academic work. What people, including students, felt was most critical, if we are to address the topics to which the CHI/MPCT is dedicated, is a place for listening and inquiring—for wondering and mulling, for debating and disclosing issues of cultural gravity.

As stewards of the public trust, universities should provide space for such deliberation and reflection. Yet every participant in the discussions with was convinced that our collective ability to deal with issues of social gravity was being undermined by the increasing fracturing and “metricization” of the university—in the form of performance metrics (numbers of papers published, years to complete degrees, h-indices, etc.), disciplinary fractionalization (e.g., in the development of “canons” for teaching and research, field-specific tenure practices and standards), commercialization pressures (especially influential regarding the acquisition of research funds), bureaucratic standardization (in governance, procedure, teaching “rubrics,” etc.). As one student said, during

64Present at the meeting were Abdul Waheed Khan, Angela Grauerholz, Anthony Pearlman, Anthony Wensley, David Rokeby, Derrick de Kerckhove, Eileen Tobey, Greg Powers, Mark Chignell, Samuel Pearlman, and Sandra Braman.
one of the planning sessions:

“Intellectuals of our generation are the people who pursue their passion from 5:00 to 10:00 p.m., after work—if they can eke out any time at all.”

There was nothing nostalgic about this call for a return to the heart of the intellectual calling. On the contrary, people from all quarters were sobered by how we were going to be able to address a widespread and growing social unease with what is happening (and what will happen) to the things that matter most—who we are, what will matter—as society continues to be reconfigured by digital, computational, and information technologies. Some expressed their concern through a sense of societal longing for—and having an intuitive sense of—something that is missing, through this technological reshaping, that we can’t quite articulate. Others highlighted a need for what McLuhan did so many years ago: the bringing of attention to what is constitutive of but invisible to present generations. Echoing another McLuhanesque approach, and again as mentioned in the summary above, many emphasized the essential place for far horizons, for the poetics of intellectual exploration, for the role of creative artists in helping us to see where we are headed.

And in another universally-agreed theme: there was unanimous agreement that, to meet its mandate and honour its legacy, the CHI/MPCT needed to combine uncompromising standards of rigour and excellence with space for irreverence, edgy, and provocative—for daring hypotheses and unconventional thinking. To make possible this exploration of unsafe conjectures and risky imagination, the CHI/MPCT itself must be safe—free from pressures of immediate publication, applicable results, homogenized performance metrics and premature peer evaluation. Ultimately, it was this sentiment led to what became a mantra of the envisioning process: that a revitalized CHI/MPCT should be a “Safe House for (Unsafe) Ideas.”

III • D — Content

Character alone is not sufficient. What will the content be of what is being envisaged?

Get at it in stages. First, if it is to host/unleash “out of the box” ideas, and be a collaborative site,65 the CHI/MPCT should not be identified with a single idea or putative “answer” to the present crisis. It is enough, to start, to agree on the general area of concern: Culture and Technology, with special (but not exclusive) emphasis on the digital and informational—not just digital and information technologies, but, more widely and perhaps more deeply, the use of information, computation, digitality, and associated ideas in understanding and figuring our social and cultural situation.

Second, with respect to digitality, information, etc., a critical but not all-that-easy commitment is that the emphasis should not be on these issues, per se (though room must be provided for them to be critiqued, unearthed, disentangled, etc.). Rather, the idea is to “assume” them, in the very particular sense of recognizing that these transformative rearrangements of technology, socio-technical practices, economic and political arrangements, etc., are underway, and figuring out (imagining, exploring) what life will be like, and should be like, in the face of them. This commitment might be framed as one of wanting to be “post-digital”—except that our aim is to escape such disciplining jargon and the particularist (media, critical/cultural theory, social science) approaches that such neologisms inevitably connote. The point may be better conveyed by analogy. A century

65Another often-mentioned theme: that the revitalized CHI/MPCT must eschew any hint of a cult of personality.
ago, the idea that home and kitchens were being “electrified” caught people’s imagination. No one talks about “electric kitchens” or “electrified homes” any longer; rather, one asks what role the kitchen plays, how homeworkers’ contributions are valued, how the nuclear family has been re-configured and displaced, how communal engagements (currently fetishized as “online communities”) decenter the physical locus of lives, etc.—where in all cases the discussions assume that housework, including cooking, is undergirded by a wide array of electrical appliances. In a similar spirit, we want not to focus on digital music, of information-based healthcare, or the like, but instead—based on deep, seasoned experience with digital systems and practices—to ask what music will be, or human vitality, or collective authorship, in a world where (as stated above) the material form of knowledge, creativity, communication, dissemination, etc. has shifted from marks on paper to digital configuration.

Third, within this general framework, the idea that emerged most strongly from the envisioning sessions was to emphasize the humane or existential dimension\textsuperscript{66} of our contemporary situation: the fate of who we are, what matters to us, in a world permeated with digital and computational configurations. To put it almost antiquely, a widespread consensus articulated in this year’s envisioning meetings was that the CHI/MPCT focus on “being” in the information age:

1. **Who are we, and who do we want to be**, in the digital/computational/information world we are creating, embracing, submitting to?

2. What is our sense of self, of other, of us? What sense of identity is a sense worth having—in all of its multiplicitous varieties: first, second, and third person, singular and plural?

Another way to put this: What would Buber…or Sartre, or Camus, or Joyce…say now? Or Godard…or Brecht, or Picasso? William and Henry James? Isaac Newton?

Some questions brought forward in this light are of an enduring sort—the kinds of issues that will undergird any more specific sessions, events, programs, etc. that the CHI/MPCT undertakes. A few, by way of illustration:

1. What is obvious to which we are not yet attending? What do we assume is obvious that in fact is not? What is going to be obvious that no one yet realizes? What will history (in 20, 30, 50 years) take to be most important characteristics or developments of the current age, of which we are not yet aware?

2. What comprehensive world view, compassionate and humane, and compatible with the best in science and technology, could have the moral depth and personal power to provide a realistic, progressive alternative to the religious right?

3. What would it take—to have an optimistic, not dystopian, sense of the future? What—in full recognition of cultural difference, multicultural diversity, and progressive values—should we be striving for, in a digitally-mediated future?

Fourth, within this overall existential orientation, members of the community, perhaps most especially including graduate students, articulated numerous specific issues and questions—around which

\textsuperscript{66}As might be said, to adopt a phenomenological approach, without that term implying restriction to the specific phenomenological tradition in recent and contemporary philosophy.
events could be organized, summer schools convened, etc.\footnote{Some, for example, could serve as “themes” for the McLuhan Fellows proposal outlined in §III.A.} A representative sampling is presented in figure 5, below—to illustrate the sort of topic around which the community has been rallying.

Fifth and finally, a superficial look at the questions in Figure 5 might suggest that the issues being considered are “all over the map,” collected without rhyme or reason. That participants did not believe this was so betrays an inchoate but (in our judgment) very important intellectual theme underlying this forging of an intellectual vision. The point can be put philosophically. One of the most enduring intellectual themes over the last several centuries has been a systematic aversion to metaphysics and foundations—a commitment perversely shared by both modernism and postmodernism, and therefore not fronted in ongoing tussles between them. Permeating the intellectual territory that the CHI/MPCT is exploring, however—a search for meaning and a desire for existential understanding in the face of the profound socio-technical change—is a desire for new foun-

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1. How are major contemporary intellectual/technological developments affecting (helping, hindering, torquing, expanding, rewriting) our sense of identify and self—including at least these (inter-related and overlapping) four: \\
   a. Computational/information-theoretic modeling and system construction (ai); \\
   b. Neuroscience; \\
   c. Internet-based systems of communication, expression, sharing; \\
   d. Cyborgian implants, “extended” minds, and dissolving human/machine boundaries. \\
2. Is knowledge passé? Educational strategies for nourishing/engendering seasoned judgment and wisdom in an age when “facts” are ubiquitously available. How do we think, learn, and know, now? And how will we do those things in the future? What is the news now? How and where can judgment, reflection, and slow deliberation be nourished? \\
3. Changes in public, private, and social uses and senses of time. \\
4. Antidotes to fundamentalism—religious, scientific, and political. \\
5. Fate, agency, and identity in a post-digital world: individual, communal, and collective (1st person, 2nd person, 3rd person; singular & plural; community; the public/private sphere; etc.). To whom and to what do we accord a sense of “we”—or of “you”…or of “that.” \\
6. “Philosophy of mechanism 2.0”: semantics, normativity, and relationality in the 21st century. \\
7. The tacit, the ineffable, the private—in a world of ubiquitous shared “information.” \\
8. Beyond self-indulgence: (Western) objectivity and (Eastern) detachment. \\
9. How do we retain Ursula Franklin’s definition of media (“The way we do things around here”) in the face of ubiquitous, and to some alienating, digital influences? \\
10. Children and their formation in a rapidly changing (and often fear-based) reality. \\
11. Cognitive implications of the digital—extensions of the brain, neurological modification, the development of cyborgs. \\
12. Sane, pragmatic, informed approaches to the “Singularity.” What that matters is at stake? And what that is at stake matters? \\
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rations, for a progressive, multiculturally aware, contextually sensitive sense of grounding strong enough to provide guidance through a period of unprecedented change, that nevertheless avoids (by moving beyond) the perils and fundamentalisms that bedeviled prior accounts. While this is not the place to pursue the point, the development of a new form of foundation might be the most important hint of sort of intellectual contribution towards which the CHI/MPCT is headed.

To this end, the plans sketched in the (failed) CFI proposal written in 2008 about the Coach House serving as a “laboratory for the humanities” could be taken as a basis on which to build a sense of “place” that would serve as, and stand witness to, a “compassionate, dispassionate, and passionate” place to wonder and query and listen—rather than as a venue for traditional academic presentations of previously-prepared views.

But the point can also be put more simply. What unites the questions in Figure 2 (and other issues like them) is their search for meaning, depth, and humanity at a time when the ground is shifting so profoundly under our feet.

III • E — Operations

Operational issues are intimately tied to those of funding (q.v.). As discussed in § II.F.1, the CHI/MPCT currently has no stable source of funds; and so any proposal for a modus operandi must be contingent on obtaining suitable support. The aim of the envisioning process being reported here, however, has been to “imagine into existence” what the best possible CHI/MPCT would be (rather than to figure out what can be done on no resources at all—which, realistically, cannot be very much).

In this light, we are currently exploring interrelated operational proposals, which (especially together) we believe will be most successful in developing the CHI/MPCT into the position to which it aspires, and most successful in bringing the world’s attention to the issues it aims to address. The first focuses on developing the interrelated structures of Junior and Senior Fellows and correlated Summer Schools on targeted themes. In conjunction with these, individual events (short-term visitors, roundtables, panels, workshops, etc.) will be hosted, as resources are available. The U.of.T and GTA environments have an incredible depth and range of expertise and talent—including Toronto’s legendary artistic communities and public thought leaders, as well as within the academy.

III • F — Resources

We are not optimistic funding for the CHI/MPCT will be obtainable from traditional peer-reviewed sources (SSHRC, NSERC, CIHR, etc.). The mandate is insufficiently incremental or disciplinarily specific. Moreover, as envisaged the CHI/MPCT is not itself a project, but rather a place for people, projects and ideas. It is more like a “humanities centre,” except that it is pointedly not restricted to the humanities.

That said, the aim is for uncompromising standards of rigour and excellence. The McLuhan name is not something we take lightly; nor is it our wish to use it for “merely another centre or interdisciplinary program.” Our explorations with potential private funders\(^{68}\) confirm this approach; interest seems strongly linked to the CHI/MPCT’s being “something different,” outside of the scope of standard publicly-funded initiatives.

\(^{68}\)Primarily through the efforts of MCM Fellow David Nostbakken.
Within this context, we envisage that Stage 1 (Operational Base) funding could be provided if the $200,000 originally allocated for the McLuhan School could be directed to the CHI/MPCT. It would pay for teaching relief for the Directors, the stipend for the Director of the MPCT, an (at least half-time) administrative assistant, five proposed 2015–2016 McLuhan Centennial Fellows, two workshops currently in planning stages: (i) on the “Soul of Cognitive Science,” querying the fate of our notion of “person” and our sense of ourselves, given technical and neuroscientific trends within contemporary cognitive science), and (ii) on information requirements for the educated citizen in the 21st century (in the form of developing an “information literacy” course for schools to teach aimed at their University’s full incoming undergraduate class, plus modest technical support, supplies, operating funds, etc.

Launching Stage 2—the McLuhan Fellowship Program, with a rolling program for 3-year post-doctoral fellows, plus associated summer schools—will require substantial additional funding, however. Possibilities for obtaining such funding are a critical next step in the evolution of the CHI/MPCT vision.

Conclusion

The three goals undertaken for the review period have been accomplished:

1. The McLuhan heritage and assets at the University of Toronto have been regularized, through the creation of the Coach House Institute as an extra-departmental unit of type C, within which the MPCT can function irreverence, innovation, and dash. The CHI/MPCT is strategically placed “on the boundary of the academy,” poised to nourish partnerships with the city, with artists, with other institutions, and yet deeply tied into the University’s intellectual soul and the minds of its students and faculty. In this way it stands witness to the most important aspects of the legacy out of which it grew, by serving as a contrapuntal steward of issues at the very heart of intellectual life.

2. Relations with McLuhan communities have been renewed and refurbished, at local, national and international levels, in such a way that we can move forward together in a positive, progressive and collaborative fashion.

3. A critically important future for the CHI/MPCT has been envisioned, that synergistically: (i) builds on the work and history of McLuhan and the Toronto School of Communication, (ii) shoulders the aims of a “skunkworks for the future University,” and (iii) responds to the profound and iterated request, from all constituents with whom we consulted, for an oasis of intellectual depth in the midst of the increasingly frenzied pace and disciplinized fracturing of academic life. These threads come together into a mandate to become a “Safe House for (Unsafe) Ideas”—by nourishing intense and provocative deliberations about that which matters most, in the face of the digital and informational transformation that is so profoundly reconfiguring contemporary society.

We are also proud of the depth and quality of consultation and guidance we have received from so many communities: local, national, and international; academic, artistic, civic, and public; inside and outside the academy, and in many cases on the boundary; with young people and old, from under-
graduate students to retired and emeritus faculty; and in general with a broad range of stakeholders for the program being envisaged.

We can also report, from these conversations, that we discovered (i) clear evidence of an essential need for a place of the type we have described—a place of intense, collaborative quiet—where we can collectively focus on the issues of greatest gravity; and (ii) clear evidence of outside interest and funding potential, if this dream can be turned into reality.

What we have described is an ambitious goal. Yet nothing less, we believe, would do justice to the heritage and promise of U.of.T’s legendary Coach House.