
The MIT Media Lab at a Glance

The MIT Media Lab transcends known boundaries and disciplines by actively promoting a unique, antidisciplinary culture that emboldens unconventional mixing and matching of seemingly disparate research areas.

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The Lab creates disruptive technologies that happen at the edges, pioneering such areas as wearable computing, tangible interfaces, and affective computing. Today, faculty members, research staff, and students at the Lab work in over 25 research groups and initiatives on more than 450 projects that range from digital approaches for treating neurological disorders, to advanced imaging technologies that can “see around a corner,” to the world’s first “smart” powered ankle-foot prosthesis. Lab researchers are committed to delving into the questions not yet asked, whose answers could radically improve the way people live, learn, express themselves, work, and play.

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Organization

The Lab is supported by more than 80 members, including some of the world’s leading corporations. Our members provide the majority of the Lab’s approximately \$75 million annual operating budget, and their businesses range from electronics to entertainment, fashion to health care, and toys to telecommunications. We conduct research in a highly collaborative and antidisciplinary environment. Many of the technologies and applications conceived at the Lab are tested and refined through experiments at MIT and in the field, in cooperation with our member organizations.

Unlike other laboratories at MIT, the Media Lab comprises both a broad research agenda and a degree-granting Program in Media Arts and Sciences. More than 30 faculty and senior researchers lead the Lab’s research program, working with over 200 research staff members, visiting scientists, postdoctoral researchers, and lecturers. Over 100 other staff members support the Lab’s research, facilities, and administration.

Graduate enrollment totals 183, with 95 master’s and 88 doctoral students. In addition, more than 45 graduate students from other MIT departments carry out research at the Lab, and more than 200 undergraduates work here each year through MIT’s Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP). Our targeted diversity efforts have also enriched the culture of the Lab, creating supportive spaces for women and students of color, and opening new lines of discussion throughout our community.

A selection of research efforts

Centers and joint programs combine the work of Media Lab researchers with collaborators throughout MIT, while smaller, more focused special interest groups and initiatives deal with particular subject areas.

Advancing Wellbeing, funded by a \$1 million grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, combines academics with on-the-ground ideas to promote better health at MIT and beyond.

CE 2.0, is a collaboration with member companies to formulate the principles for a new generation of consumer electronics that are highly connected, seamlessly interoperable, situation-aware, and radically simpler to use.

The **Center for Civic Media**, a joint program with MIT’s Comparative Media Studies/ Writing program, creates and deploys technical and social tools that meet the information needs of communities.

The **Center for Extreme Bionics** is an interdisciplinary effort at MIT which challenges current assumptions about serious physical and mental impairments.

Communications Futures Program, a joint effort focused on broad issues of communications—from telephony to RFID—with MIT’s Sloan School of Management and the Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory (CSAIL).

Community Biotechnology researchers are developing tools and technologies to enable the broadest possible participation in biotechnology. Projects include the creation of low-cost enabling hardware, infrastructure for sharing, and new interfaces for artistic expression with biology.

The **MIT Digital Currency Initiative (DCI)**, based at the Media Lab, brings together global experts in areas ranging from cryptography, to economics, to privacy, to distributed systems to explore the many issues involved in blockchain and bitcoin technology.

Emerging Worlds works to solve problems in areas such as health, education, financial inclusion, food and agriculture, housing, transportation, and local business. It is focused on emerging opportunities to address pressing challenges and leapfrog existing solutions.

Ethics and Governance of Artificial Intelligence explores global applications to advance AI research for the public good.

Laboratory for Social Machines, funded by a five-year, \$10-million commitment from Twitter, develops new technologies to make sense of semantic and social patterns across the broad span of public mass media, social media, data streams, and digital content.

Media Lab Learning, exploring learning across dimensions—from neurons to nations, from early childhood to lifelong scholarship, and from human creativity to machine intelligence. The initiative is designing tools and technologies that change how, when, where, and what we learn; and developing new solutions to enable and enhance learning everywhere.

Open Agriculture (OpenAg) builds collaborative tools and platforms to develop an open source ecosystem of food technologies that enables and promotes transparency, networked experimentation, education, and local production.

Open Ocean researchers work at the intersection of science, technology, art, and society to design and deploy new ways to understand the ocean and connect people to it in novel ways, empowering a global community of explorers.

Space Exploration aims to drive innovation at the frontiers of space exploration, from the holy grail of “life in space” to widespread societal involvement in “open space.”

Ultimate Media is a multi-group project that is working to build a new platform for visual media that reinvents real-time exploration and contribution.