

The Official Newsletter of the Ashdown Community

Message from the Editor

Dear Readers,

Ashdown is getting ready for another academic year with new officers and AHEC members, and a flurry of activities has been going on, despite the sizzling summer heat.

In this issue we had the opportunity to talk with Matt Haberland, the previous chair of the Ashdown House Executive Committee (AHEC). We tried out an evening of printmaking, and one of our fellow Ashdowners gave us his take on Boston.

We are excited to hold the first annual Ashdown summer writing contest, whose winner will receive a \$25 Amazon gift card, and the runner-ups get AMC tickets. Look out for flyers, and send us your submissions!

Sincerely,
Anne-Raphaelle Aubry
Liang Jie Wong
Ashdown Newsletter Officers

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Contact the Editor

Please direct any comments or queries about "3am" to Anne-Raphaelle Aubry ("Anne") at aubry@mit.edu

Interview with Matt Haberland

1. What is your major and which year are you in?

I'm a second year PhD candidate in mechanical engineering. I work in the Biomimetic Robotics Lab on the creation of a robotic cheetah. My work involves modeling and simulation of dynamics, mechanical hardware design, and controller design.

2. What did you do before coming to MIT?

After graduating with my BS and MEng from Cornell in 2007, I worked for two years at the NASA/Caltech Jet Propulsion Lab in Pasadena. I created hardware for the next Mars rover, "Curiosity", that will launch with the Mars Science Laboratory mission this fall.

3. What made you run for AHEC?

I ran for AHEC because I enjoy leadership positions in which I can make a positive difference. They give me something fun, but still productive, to do outside of work.

4. What other leadership positions have you held around MIT?

As AHEC Chair, I've also been Ashdown's representative to the GSC General Body and the GSC Housing and Community Affairs Committee. I'm also currently working to revitalize the Thirsty Ear Executive Committee. In March, I finished my term as Vice President of GAME (Graduate Association of Mechanical Engineers). Before I was AHEC Chair, I was a member of the social committee at Ashdown.

5. How much time commitment has your post as the AHEC chair required of you?

That's very difficult to estimate because serving the role is closely integrated with the rest of my life. Some of my time in lab, at home, and on the go is dedicated to AHEC. I spend 5-20 hours per week at Meetings or events wearing my AHEC hat. This doesn't include email time, which can be the bulk of the job; my Gmail account is getting pretty full. The position readily accepts all the time I have to give.

6. Most residents are unfamiliar with the inner workings of AHEC. Could you give us a flavor (maybe through some examples) of how AHEC gets ideas and implements them?

To help answer this question, I'm looking at a partial list of about 75 projects AHEC members have worked toward this year. I remember that some of these came up at the AHEC transition retreat in May of last year, like the purchase of drying racks for checkout at the front desk. Others were brought to the current AHEC by residents, like the ideas of getting hammocks for the courtyard, a drum set for the music room, doorstops for suites, and additional sports channels for the common areas. Some items are to support the efforts of officers, like the purchase and installation of a volleyball net and gym equipment and organization of the MIT-Harvard party. AHEC often initiates and facilitates projects to be implemented by officers, such as the scanner in the computer room, the "art auction" at coffee hour, and the guest list. Other AHEC ideas are carried out by AHEC members, like the addition of recycling bins to every bedroom and dry erase markers for every whiteboard. Some are continued traditions, such as securing funding for brunch and holding officer dinners. AHEC deals with issues brought to Ashdown House from the outside, such as the loading dock constructed next door and the bikes that were damaged by snow plows. Some opportunities have arisen due to larger changes within MIT, such as the chance to select Ashdown's first Associate Housemasters. And much important work is only indirectly seen by residents, like improvement and documentation of many AHEC and officer system policies, that guides the continued success of Ashdown's house government.



Matt Haberland

Interview with Matt Haberland

7. What further improvements to Ashdown would you make if you could be chair for another year?

There are several projects started this year that I would like to see through. Luckily, next year's AHEC is an extraordinarily capable group led by an outstanding new Chairperson, so I look forward to reaping the benefits without doing the work! Most notable among these projects is the completion of an Ashdown trophy case outside the housemasters' apartment, the creation of a history wall in the Crafts lounge, and the addition of new common space within Ashdown.

8. Are there any aspects of your job that you think would come as a surprise (pleasant or otherwise) to someone who is new to it?

Some AHEC members were surprised by the amount of time required.

I was surprised by the increase in email volume. I have been disappointed by the adversarial attitude sometimes encountered in talks between administration and students on important issues.

I have been pleasantly surprised in getting to know the other AHEC members, Housemasters, Ashdown officers, and other leaders on campus.

9. Are there any political or social issues you feel passionately about?

As an engineer, I think the US should adopt the metric system.

10. What are the most important qualities that would recommend a person to you as an AHEC member?

An AHEC member should have the drive and tenacity to make things happen at Ashdown House. There is a constant flow of good ideas; it takes a lot of sustained effort to see these things through to completion.

11. What's the best part about being the Ashdown AHEC chair?

Housemaster dinners for life is a big perk!

An evening of Printmaking – Liang Jie Wong

At about 8:30 p.m. on a Tuesday evening, a party of artistically-inclined Ashdowners entered the warrens on the fourth floor of the Stratton Student Center to indulge in an activity not commonly associated with minds that dwell on the forefront of technology: printmaking!

As a technology, printmaking dates back to before 3000 BC with the use of round "cylinder seals" for rolling an impress onto clay tablets in early Mesopotamian civilization ¹. Woodcut engraving, a form of printmaking, was used to produce illustrations in American publications like Harper's Weekly in the 19th century².

The printmaking event was organized by Ashdown Art Officer Vivian Hecht.



Ashdowners absorbed in their printmaking

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_printing

² <http://www.cartage.org.lb/en/themes/arts/graphicartists/generalities/Historyofprintmaking.htm>

An evening of Printmaking



Hannah, inking her stamp with a brayer

The form of printmaking in which we dabbled that evening was, in technical terms, a hybrid of linoleum block printing and stamp-making. Our instructor was A. J. Liberto³, a friendly and approachable MIT Student Arts Association (SAA) instructor who teaches art classes at MIT during the school semester. Each of us was given a rubber pad, a set of chisels and a pencil. The procedure basically involved making a sketch on the rubber pad with the pencil and using the chisel to skim off parts of the rubber pad so that the desired image appears in relief upon the pad.

After that, one washes the etched pad to remove any pencil marks and coats the pad with a layer of paint (which we also got to mix ourselves) with a rolling tool called a brayer. One then places the paper or card meant for the print on the freshly-inked surface of the pad and applies pressure with a pressing tool called a barren. One may wash the pad to apply a new coat of paint for another bout of printing.

Printmaking of this form is a neat and low-cost way of mass-producing original artwork for the purpose of making personalized stationery or invitation cards. Although A. J. was able to teach us only the rudiments of the craft in the allotted time of one-and-a-half hours, we enjoyed ourselves thoroughly that evening and left the student center with beautiful prints and yet another aspect of the MIT experience indelibly stamped upon our minds.



Vivian makes the print, applying pressure with a barren



Haritha, the prolific printmaker



Emily displaying her opus

³ MIT SAA instructor A. J. Liberto may be contacted at ajliberto@gmail.com.

Citizen's Corner: Beijinger in Boston – Qing Xu

When my plane landed in the US after 19 hours of flight, I was curious about everything in this new continent. Looking down through my window, I was shocked by the endless sea of lights in Chicago. At 2 am I finally got to my new home in Ashdown. I felt lonely at first, because for the first time I was tens of thousands of miles away from my hometown in China and knew nothing about life in the US. The staff at the front desk warmly received me and showed me around Ashdown. He told me that I was lucky to live in the best dorm at MIT. After living here for over seven months, I believe what he said was absolutely true.



Fall Foliage Trip



The Temple of Heaven in Beijing

Everything here is different from what I was used to in China. From the very beginning of orientation, my schedule was full of wonderful activities. While in China we went out for barbecue and karaoke, I feel that people here are wild about parties, dancing, bars and beer. Students are more social and outgoing. They keep talking and laughing in the office, which is unheard of in Chinese universities. Students from East Asia are used to keeping quiet in classrooms and offices.

Having suffered from the sand storms and dry air in Beijing for 4 years, I love the blue sky and white clouds here in Boston. The only time when Beijing had clean air was during the 2008 Olympics. Almost everyone in the US drives a car, while we have millions of bikes in Beijing. I am still curious as to why the air here is cleaner. When I went on the Wachusett Mountain Fall Foliage Trip last autumn, I was intoxicated by the fresh air, nature, and beautiful scenery.

When I was in Beijing, I liked visiting old temples and palaces, which record China's glorious history. The US is a relatively young country. Luckily Boston is among the oldest cities here, over 400 years old, and I can feed my interest in history and culture.

The architectural style here is very different from what we have in China. Last September when I walked the Freedom Trail, I was attracted by the old churches, sculptures and the city hall. I also learned a great deal about the Colonial Revolutionary Boston and the Independence War.



Traditional Chinese Food

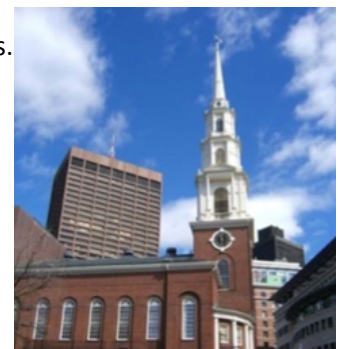
The only thing that I do not like here is the food. I have such a Chinese stomach that I cannot live on sandwiches, pastas or hamburgers. I keep dreaming of all the delicious food in my hometown, and I go to the Chinese market every two weeks to buy what I like and cook for myself.



Hamburger

I am a good cook, and my steamed fish is especially popular among friends. The problem is that there is not enough time to cook sometimes, so the Asian food truck has become one of my favorites. I also go to Chinatown to enjoy hotpot with my friends on weekends.

Although life here is different from that in my hometown in many ways, I love this great city of Boston, especially its cultural diversity and history. Why not shrug off the shackles of your academic preoccupations for a while, and enjoy the spring sunshine in this charming city?



Park Street Church in Boston

Ashdown Summer Writing Contest

In **less than 1000 words**, talk about how your research is making a difference to the world in a way that is accessible to laymen. The judging criteria are:

- 1) Accessibility to a completely non-technical audience
- 2) Effectiveness of message

Word limit: 1000 words

Eligibility: **All residents** of Ashdown House

PRIZES: **\$25 Amazon gift card** for the winner

2 AMC tickets each for top two runner-ups

Publication in Ashdown newsletter "3am" for all essays of merit.

Citizen's Corner: Submission Guidelines

Do you have a flair for writing? Do you have an experience you would love to share? A cause you want to speak out for? An event you would like publicized and reported?

The ears of Ashdown are thirsting to hear your story!

The "Citizen's Corner" is a section of "3am" aimed at reflecting the lives and perspectives of Ashdown residents. All Ashdown residents are invited to contribute, and all kinds of material are welcome. In the past, we have received everything from overseas exchange program stories to essays about environmentalism. We are especially keen on the views of international students comparing the way of life (in terms of culture, atmosphere, education system etc.) here to the ones they were used to.

Guidelines in a nutshell:

- Submissions should be between 100 and 1500 words.
- No politically sensitive, religiously sensitive or pornographic material.
- Pictures to accompany text are welcome.
- Email title: "3AM SUB: <title of submission>".
- Email Anne-Raphaelle Aubry ("Anne") at aubry@mit.edu.

