

COMMTRACKS

MAY 2022

ISSUE 18

WE INTERRUPT YOUR COLLEGE EXPERIENCE

A PUBLICATION BY THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS AT SIMMONS UNIVERSITY

COMMTRACKS

Department Co-Chairs

Cathryn Mercier & Briana Martino

Design Team

Dani Caisse & Marissa Johnson

Editorial Team

Jane Donohue & Alyssa Stevens

Cover and Spread Design

Dani Caisse & Marissa Johnson

Writers

Catherine Bernard, Caitlyn Bucci,
Dani Caisse, Katie Cole

Photography

Dani Caisse, Iz Indelicato, Haley Jean,
Yasmeen Ibrahim, Lennon Sherburne
All other photographs are
courtesy of those pictured.

Consulting Advisors

Rachel Gans-Boriskin & Kat Lombard-Cook

CommTracks Magazine 2022 issue 18: Layout in Adobe InDesign CC; body copy is Univers by Adrian Frutiger; title typography is Stenciletta by Joachim Müller-Lancé.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means without prior written permission of the editorial team and consulting advisors, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses as permitted by copyright law.

This is a free publication.

Bylines for *CommTracks* writers and contributors are denoted on each page. Editors who participated in this magazine are credited on the masthead. All opinions are their own unless otherwise noted. The editorial team is committed to preserving the integrity and transparency of this issue. If a significant error is discovered, *CommTracks* may issue an erratum or corrigendum notice to alert all readers.

Printed in Boston by Simmons Copy & Mail Services

© 2022 *CommTracks* Magazine

Contents

- | | | | |
|----|--|----|---|
| 02 | Welcome | 14 | Run, If Option
by catherine bernard |
| 03 | Finding Home in
the Student-Driven
Media Center
by katie cole | 16 | Reflections on Loss
by katie cole |
| 04 | Letter from the Chairs | 17 | In Memoriam:
James Corcoran
by: alyssa stevens |
| 06 | Thoughts on
the Continuity of
COMMunity
by rachel gans-boriskin and
kat lombard-cook | 18 | Thank You, Judith!
by jane donohue |
| 08 | Meet the Seniors | 20 | The Box that
Fell Off the Ship
by caitlyn bucci |
| 10 | <i>COMMTracks</i>
Welcomes Two New
Members to the
COMMunity!
by alyssa stevens | 22 | A Light in the
Dark(room)
by dani caisse |
| 12 | Meet the Faculty | 25 | Student Work |

Welcome

Welcome to the 2022 edition of CommTracks, and congratulations to the class of 2022! It's been a tumultuous four years, but this year's seniors have adapted to and overcome the changes and challenges we faced during our time at Simmons.

When we left campus for spring break in 2020, none of us expected that we wouldn't return until fall of 2021. As sophomores, our time at Simmons was interrupted at almost the exact midway point of our college experience. This past fall, we returned to campus as seniors. Many of us didn't feel like seniors. We should've had three years of experience on campus under our belts; instead, we'd been on campus for a little over one and a half years before the pandemic sent us home.

In the midst of this, we experienced other interruptions and other losses. Loss of normalcy and security, loss of loved ones, loss of a typical college experience.

Despite this, our class has not let these interruptions define us. When we couldn't attend school in-person, we took classes, completed research, and connected with friends over Zoom. Communications students made podcasts, published zines, produced digital art, and wrote news articles. Upon our return to campus, we were able to jump back into all of the things we loved most about the Communications department—hanging out in the Comm Lab, spending time at the radio station, or just getting work done with our friends in the Comm Lounge.

In this year's issue of CommTracks, you'll read stories of the different kinds of interruptions we experienced during our time at Simmons and how we overcame them. We'll say farewell to familiar faces in the department as well as welcoming some new folks. We'll honor those we've lost and celebrate our achievements as a community. Above all, we'll celebrate you, the graduating seniors of 2022. You've shown resilience, passion, creativity, and dedication during your time at Simmons. We can't wait to see what you do next.

— The CommTracks Team

Finding Home in the Student-Driven Media Center

by katie cole

There is something so beautiful about walking into a space and being able to call it home. Not to push aside boxes of those who came before you. Not to clear out the cobwebs in the corners. But to walk in and call it yours. This is the feeling I got when I walked into the new Student-Driven Media Center for the first time this fall.

I joined student media in my freshman year, hitting the ground running with Simmons Radio: the Shark and quickly joining the EBoard. For my entire student media career, I did not have a place that felt completely like home. Simmons Radio: the Shark had no set meeting room. Our radio studios on the third floor of Lefavour Hall were wonderful and well-loved, but not big enough to host meetings or group conversations.

In my first year on the EBoard, our team would hold meetings at a table in the Fens. In my second year, we met in a room in the basement of Lefavour hall until we were sent home because of the COVID pandemic. In my third year, we were on Zoom. We were floating around with no official place to put down roots as a group.

Coming back to campus for my senior year, I was the only member of our EBoard who had ever touched the mix board in the radio station. We spent much of the fall semester building anew, teaching students how to run a radio show and use the station. In a lot of ways, it felt as if we were creating a whole new organization on campus, not one that had been running successfully for over a decade. But the great thing about starting over is we can rebuild in whatever way we want, we can design how we want the next decade, and we can now do it in a space that feels part of a distinct community of student media members.

Over the years, the new home will become broken in and see generations of student media leaders make their mark in a space that feels distinctly theirs. The cobwebs will come and the spider will watch the greatness that happens within these walls. For now, they are starting anew like us, spinning their webs as we spin ours.



On every trip down the first floor hallway toward the Communications Department, I pass the Gwen Ifill wall. Most days, it recedes into the background, another well-designed wallpaper that's become comfortable and familiar. But, every now and then, it interrupts me. I stop, I learn about the namesake of our College, and I ask myself if I have channeled the grace, the generosity, and the professionalism I see played out on these walls. I ask myself if I am "doing the hard work of imagining a just future"—and then I ask myself the harder question: Am I doing the even harder work to create a just future?



We talk about "university" as if it's a single and singular experience. And yet, we all know that "university" has as many and varied experiences as there are individual students, faculty, staff. Multiple versions not uni-versions. As COVID re-shaped our teaching and learning into little boxes cast onto someone else's video-screen, we keenly felt the individuality and solitariness of our educational pursuits. We yearned for the energetic collaboration that identifies a Communications student. We tried to 'pass notes' via chat, we set up google meets and zoom workspaces. From inside the box it was very hard to see the future.



We tried so very hard to translate this new educational space into a place where education happens. We kept our connections, we deepened our passions, and we missed each other—we missed the resounding laughter in Common Grounds, the impromptu gatherings in the Comm Lounge, the creative energy of Comm Labs, the vitality of CommWorks, the diner-like study booths where we could hide and still be found. In these places, we talked about experienced injustices and we committed to ourselves and each other to make a better future.



September 2021 brought us back in person—no more little boxes suggesting that we were all just talking heads. Learning engages with our full selves

and it felt oh-so-very-good to be back together again.

Empowered with new ways of communicating, we were ready to put to use the new Student-Driven Media podcast booths, radio station, TV studio, and offices for student driven media orgs like the *Voice*. And the return was joyful. Cries of recognition and welcome echoed through our hallways and—as one does with the very best friends, we slipped right back into knowing and being together. We no longer had to imagine our future together; we were about to start making it, together, again.

The interruption left us with gaps: saying good-bye to our good friend, teacher, mentor, and social justice journalist Jim Corcoran; cheering the inventiveness and inspiration of our champion Ellen Grabiner as she retired to follow her own creative spirits. Even our new President sustained an 18-month interruption in her investiture!

And the interruption filled us anew: we welcomed Traci Griffith—media ethicist, public scholar, DEI expert, former correspondent and national editor for the Associated Press whose work tracks ethics in a digital age. And Kat Lombard-Cook, whose multi-modal storytelling blends the visual, textual, oral, and aural. And finally, the investiture of Lynn Perry Wooten, our first African American woman President to lead Simmons into our future.

As the spring 2022 horizon approaches all too quickly, you bustle toward whatever work or research or internships or travel summer might bring, whatever career beginnings our graduating seniors will launch. We see the future; ready or not, here comes Simmons! I hope you can pause to reflect on your losses and I hope you can take a moment to be grateful for the new people who have entered your lives. Take a moment to thank Professor Judith Aronson for her dedication to Simmons and raise a toast to her as she retires from Simmons. Take a moment to consider how every teacher and every other student has changed you, has fostered your intellectual curiosity and sparked your creative growth. Slow down a bit to recognize the new strengths you have garnered.

In a field where you dedicate so much of your time to telling others' stories, sit outside in the main campus "backyard" or in the residence quad, or in a quiet corner of your favorite cafe: what's your story? How will you shape it? To whom will you tell it? And what difference will it make in the lives and futures of others?

Cathie Mercier
Acting Chair of Communications

Briana Martino
Acting Assistant Chair of Communications



Thoughts on the Continuity of COMMunity

by **rachel gans-boriskin** and **kat lombard-cook**

Communities are built in connection: connection to each other, connection to spaces (on the ground or virtual), and connection to tradition. Certainly this is true of our COMMunity. Every year, we say goodbye to one class of students as we welcome an incoming class. Each group of students is drawn into our COMMunity, participating in old traditions and beginning new ones.

Traditions require continuity; we pass our customs along to those who come after us. What does a tradition mean if we receive it without getting to meet the sender? We can follow the pattern they left for us and hope to understand our predecessors by walking in their shoes, or we can take the material they have gifted us and craft new meaning for ourselves.

This year's graduating seniors had to reimagine what it meant to be a community as the pandemic upended our lives. They came back to a changed campus and had to introduce a new group of students to the COMMunity they were still building.

Like many students, this is my first year on-campus at Simmons. I felt like a first-year, figuring out where offices and classrooms were. In this, I was far from alone. I turned to seniors to help orient me, but they often felt lost too, as the construction had erased familiar routes and rooms were renumbered across campus.

And just as students welcomed new classmates, faculty in our department welcomed new colleagues. We helped Kat Lombard-Cook and Traci Griffith find their offices and shared our syllabi with them. We explained acronyms and made recommendations about the best things to eat in the Fens.

Despite the unique challenges this year has brought, everyone—students, staff, and faculty—has come together to make Simmons a family again. This eclectic clan has welcomed new relatives to the fold, like myself and Traci, with the same warmth offered to those returning to the fold after a year and a half at home. We tried to balance life and work in equal measure, as Kristina Markos and Erica Moura welcomed their own new additions. But, like most every family, the Comm department has grieved as well as celebrated this year.

I am struck by the fact that so many of the people I met in my first weeks at Simmons seven years ago are no longer here. Death claimed beloved colleagues Jim Corcoran and Len Mailloux, while last year, retirement's promise of new adventures enticed Ellen Grabiner and Andy Porter to leave our midst.

As a new member of the COMMunity, I inherited lessons, wisdom and traditions from those I did not get a chance to meet. There were tangible gifts as well: the monitor from Ellen, the keyboard from Andy, and a cap from someone's regalia, loaned to me during a rainy convocation. I'll wear that cap, a gift from an unknown sender, at each of the traditions that mark the opening and closing of the Simmons year. It reminds me of those who have come before me and laid the foundations on which we continue to build.

While I feel the absence of departed colleagues, I am also aware of the ways their presence remains. They helped build our COMMunity, teaching not only a generation of students, but also a generation of faculty. Together with our new colleagues, we will honor the past by nurturing what those who came before us created: a COMMunity, connected through tradition, space, and a dedication to each other.

Together (with our students) we were learning the meaning of Simmons traditions and making them anew.

Meet The Seniors

Key



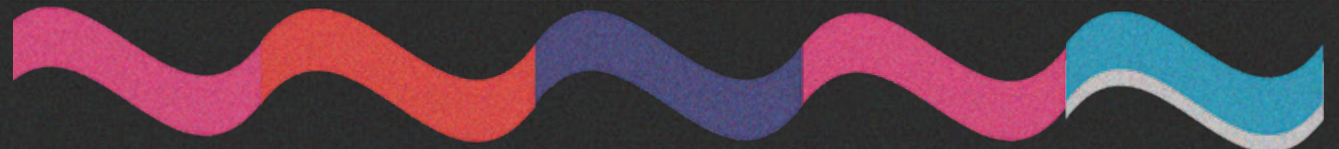
Graphic Design Journalism Media Arts PR/MARCOM Web Design & Development Cinema & Media Studies Radio



Dani Caisse Marissa Johnson Jane Donohue Alyssa Stevens Anna Lacy



Abbie Badget Krissy Llyod Christina Jang Ailia Rochefort Katie Cole



Addie Sargent Catherine Bernard Caitlyn Bucci Wanjing Li Haley Jean



Shaina Ambros Lennon Sherburne Yasmeen Ibrahim Michaela Hayes Kelsey Benedict



COMMTracks Welcomes Two New Members to the COMMunity!

by alyssa stevens



Kat Lombard-Cook

Kat Lombard-Cook is an educator, designer, and researcher specializing in visual communications and design. She has had a diverse professional and academic career that has taken her from working at a corporate and broadcast video production company to living in Scotland for six years, to then teaching all across the Massachusetts area. She has worked as a production assistant, teleprompter, motion graphic designer, co-creative director, professor, and more. Growing up in New England herself, she has found a home here at Simmons as an Assistant Professor in the Communications Department. Already she is inspiring students to design creatively and find new ways of communicating visually.



Traci Griffith

Traci Griffith comes to Simmons as an Associate Professor and Internship Coordinator for the Communications Department with an abundant background in media ethics and law. She has previously been a correspondent and national editor for the Associated Press, along with her years of studying law. Before coming to Simmons, she spent nineteen years as a faculty member at St. Michael's College in Vermont. Griffith also serves on the executive committee of the national board of the ACLU. Now, she is focused on teaching media ethics and laws during our digital age. Through her classes and as a mentor to students, Griffith is educating students on producing ethical news stories by understanding how our own biases play into the content they produce.

Meet The Faculty

1. Cathryn Mercier

Professor, Director, and Chair of M.A. and M.F.A. Children's Literature programs, Director, Center for the Study of Children's Literature, Acting Chair, Communications Department

2. Briana Martino

Acting Assistant Chair and Assistant Professor of Communications, Affiliate Faculty, Women's and Gender Studies, Co-director, Cinema and Media Studies

3. Kat Lombard-Cook

Assistant Professor of Communication

4. Rachel Gans-Boriskin

Assistant Professor of Practice of Communication

5. Judith Aronson

Professor of Communication

6. Traci Griffith

Associate Professor of Communication and Internship Coordinator

7. Kris Erickson

Assistant Teaching Professor of Communication

8. Bob White

Professor of Communication

9. Luke Romanak

Assistant Director, Student Media and Academic Technology

10. Erica Moura

Assistant Professor of Practice of Communication and Faculty Director of Student-Driven Media

11. Kristina Markos

Associate Professor of Practice of Communication and Online Program Director of Communication

12. Anna Gibson

Adjunct Faculty of Communication



Run, If Option

by catherine bernard

It's October 2018 and my first project as a college student is due at midnight tonight. My friend and I have been in the CommLab for hours, cutting and gluing with our brand new X-Acto knives and rubber cement, only looking up from our matboards to check the clock as it nears 3 p.m.. We're so focused on our work that we don't see the monitors around us freeze and turn white until the lab agent starts screaming. Each computer shows the same message: "Active Threat on Campus. If on campus, barricade door & hide. Avoid windows. Run, if option."

The agent reacts fast, pushing a large color printer in front of the door we can't lock manually before I even understand what's happening. Others run for the window blinds and light switches. When she sees me still standing in the center of the room, an older student grabs my hand and pulls me under a table. Computer cords bump my ponytail as I press my back against the wall, shuffling my sneakers as close to my body as physically possible so they don't show. Once all seven of us are hidden under the computer tables, a sickening stillness fills the CommLab; the only sound comes from our breathing, the only light comes from the fragile panel of glass next to the door.

The person to my right hands me their phone so I can read a Tweet with new information, starting a perverted game of telephone that would last almost an hour. A friend says there's a shooter at the School of Management. A parent says police are focusing on the Lefavour building. My older sister can hear noises from the library classroom she's stuck in and tells me she's scared. The older student asks me if I'm okay and I realize that quiet tears are rolling down my cheeks, so I shove my face into my thighs in case they turn audible and give us away.

The first all-clear message is filled with question marks and, for some people, emojis. We don't have to speak to agree that that isn't good enough to get us out of our hiding spot. With a second, correct all-clear text and faculty assurance that we really are safe, I'm once again standing in the center of the CommLab, staring at my unfinished work. The lab agent has pushed the printer back where it belongs, the lights are on, and the green of the quad is visible through the windows. My friend and I watch as the others grab their things and leave. My sister messages me

to get off campus immediately. I promise her I will and then grab my X-Acto knife; after all, this project is still due at midnight.

When I return to the dorms a couple hours later, everyone is in the hallway instead of in their rooms, keeping each other company in their misery. My roommate asks if I'm okay and I nod before bursting into harsh sobs.

I was a senior by the time I returned to the CommLab, this time as a lab agent. It was October 2021 and I was halfway through writing a Photoshop tutorial when the computer screen froze and turned white during my afternoon shift. In the millisecond before the message appeared, I froze as well, reviewing the steps to secure the room mentally, noting the irony of me still sitting in the same lab three years later. I only read the beginning of the alert when it flashed on the screen: "This is a test..."

I breathed shakily as I looked over the rest of the room. The two students at the center table hadn't even looked up from where they were cutting their matboards, a third student to the side closed the alert window to continue working on a video project. I turned back to my own desk, my brain saying I was overreacting, my adrenaline saying everyone else was under-reacting.

At the end of the Spring 2022 semester, the majority of students who remember the lockdown three years ago will leave Simmons. I find myself torn between wanting to tell the story to newer students so it isn't forgotten and wanting to take the memory with me when I leave, detach it from campus so it doesn't hang over the heads of the classes behind me. I hope the class of 2022 takes our traumas with us when we leave, knowing that our hurts and strengths have changed this school for the better. I hope the incoming classes, who will undoubtedly face terrible things, will face their own problems instead of repeats of ours.

Reflections on Loss

by katie cole

My Grandmother passed away the day before the start of my final semester at Simmons. It felt like my heart was ripped from my body.

My Grandmother—Gri, as my family calls her—was the kindest person you would ever meet. She loved birds and baking and cooking shows. She always kept tabs on every member of her family, which is a feat considering she had six children and twelve grandchildren. Whenever I called her she would let me know the news of the family—who was traveling where, who got a new job, who was starting school.

When reflecting on what brought our class together, the first thing that came to mind is loss. So many of us have lost loved ones over these past four years. As I write this, the United States just surpassed 900,000 COVID deaths, and that doesn't take into account the other losses: the heart attacks, the cancer, the old age, the accidents.

As a Communications Department, we know this loss all too well. We lost Professor Jim Corcoran in the fall of 2021. His light shone so brightly throughout the halls of Simmons. As an incredibly talented journalist and author, he taught his students with fire and passion. He always pushed students to be their best. He was always there to support them, no matter what. He was always there to lend a smile or wisdom.

Over the last few months, I've thought a lot about how to go on after loss, how to continue after it feels like your heart has been ripped out. And what I've determined is this: you go on by carrying on everything good they gave you.

Gri loved baking, so I love baking. She passed on her love of birds to me, and now I always point out the ones I know to my roommates, friends, whoever will listen. She was kind, so I do my best to measure up to how caring she was. She reported news of the family, so I too report out news, albeit in a different way.

Those who we have lost, as individuals and as a community, are not lost to us. They go on with us in our hearts, our minds, and how we carry on their legacy.

In Memoriam: James Corcoran

by alyssa stevens

James P. Corcoran, also known as Jim, spent his entire teaching career here at Simmons University. He taught for 35 years, leading classes on journalism, feature writing, opinion writing, the media, the First Amendment, and more. Jim also served as Chair of the Communications Department at Simmons for 17 years. Additionally, he was an adviser to the student newspaper *The Voice*, aided in revamping the journalism program, and established the university's internet radio station, *The Shark*. Over his career he has inspired countless students, instilling in them the power of the written word.

Student Isabelle Indelicato, who had the opportunity to work closely with Jim, said he "taught me how to think critically, be curious, and write with integrity."

A native of North Dakota, Jim experienced incredible success before ever becoming a part of the Simmons community. He authored two outstanding books on domestic terrorism: *Bitter Harvest* and *Gathering Storm: America's Militia Threat*. Before that, he was a reporter for the *The Forum* of Fargo-Moorhead where he wrote his Pulitzer Prize-nominated series of articles on Gordon Kahl.



Photo of Professor Corcoran taken by Iz Indelicato.

In October of 2021, Professor Corcoran lost his battle with cancer and the Simmons community lost a brilliant professor. This was a great loss to the Simmons community and anyone who was lucky enough to have known him. However, his legacy will live on through the lessons he dedicated his life to teaching and the lasting impact he has had on those around him. The James P. Corcoran Scholarship Fund in Communications is being created in his honor.

Cathryn Mercier, Acting Chair of Communications, perhaps said it best: "To talk of Jim Corcoran means to talk of telling stories. Stories about Simmons, stories about dearly loved Carolyn, about baseball, about music, and— best of all— stories about the stories we tell and how we tell them." He is and will be missed.

Thank You, Judith!

by jane donohue

After 33 years teaching at Simmons, Professor Judith Aronson announced she will be retiring at the end of the 2022 school year.

As a professor of graphic design and typography, Judith has taught hundreds of Simmons students in the Communications department. Her love of design, typography, and photography is infectious, and she has provided the Communications department with valuable energy and insight throughout her time at Simmons.

"I've taken classes with Judith for the past two years and she's helped me grow as a designer," said senior Dani Caisse. "Her projects are so well designed and the skills I've gained in just the three classes I've had with her make me feel confident that I will succeed in a design job."



Judith in her home garden.

A designer and photographer for over thirty years, Judith's expertise has allowed her to provide students with a theoretical understanding of their craft along with hands-on experience.

"I think few professors have had such a profound influence on the Department as Judith," said Assistant Professor of Practice Rachel Gans-Boriskin. "Her students are successful because Judith is a



Judith as a cheerleader in high school.

passionate educator. She loves her students and makes sure they know the fundamentals of design, not just the latest software."

During her time at Simmons, Judith received a grant from the Colleges of the Fenway to develop and teach the course Wayfindings: Design, Information Architecture and Public Spaces. Her book of portraits *LIKENESS, with the Sitters Writing About One Another* was published in 2010, with exhibitions of the portraits opening at the Picture Gallery, Christ Church, Oxford, and the Poetry Society, London.

"Her influence will live on in this department, even as her absence will be deeply felt," said Gans-Boriskin.

While we'll miss seeing Judith in class and around the Communications department, we can't wait to see what she does next. From the Communications class of 2022, thank you, Judith!



Judith helping senior Anna Lacy with her Advanced Design magazine.

The Box that Fell Off the Ship

by caitlyn bucci

This pandemic hit the world harder than we thought. It caused us to become distant and isolated. Everyone had a similar yet different experience so I am here to share mine. So, let's start from the beginning....

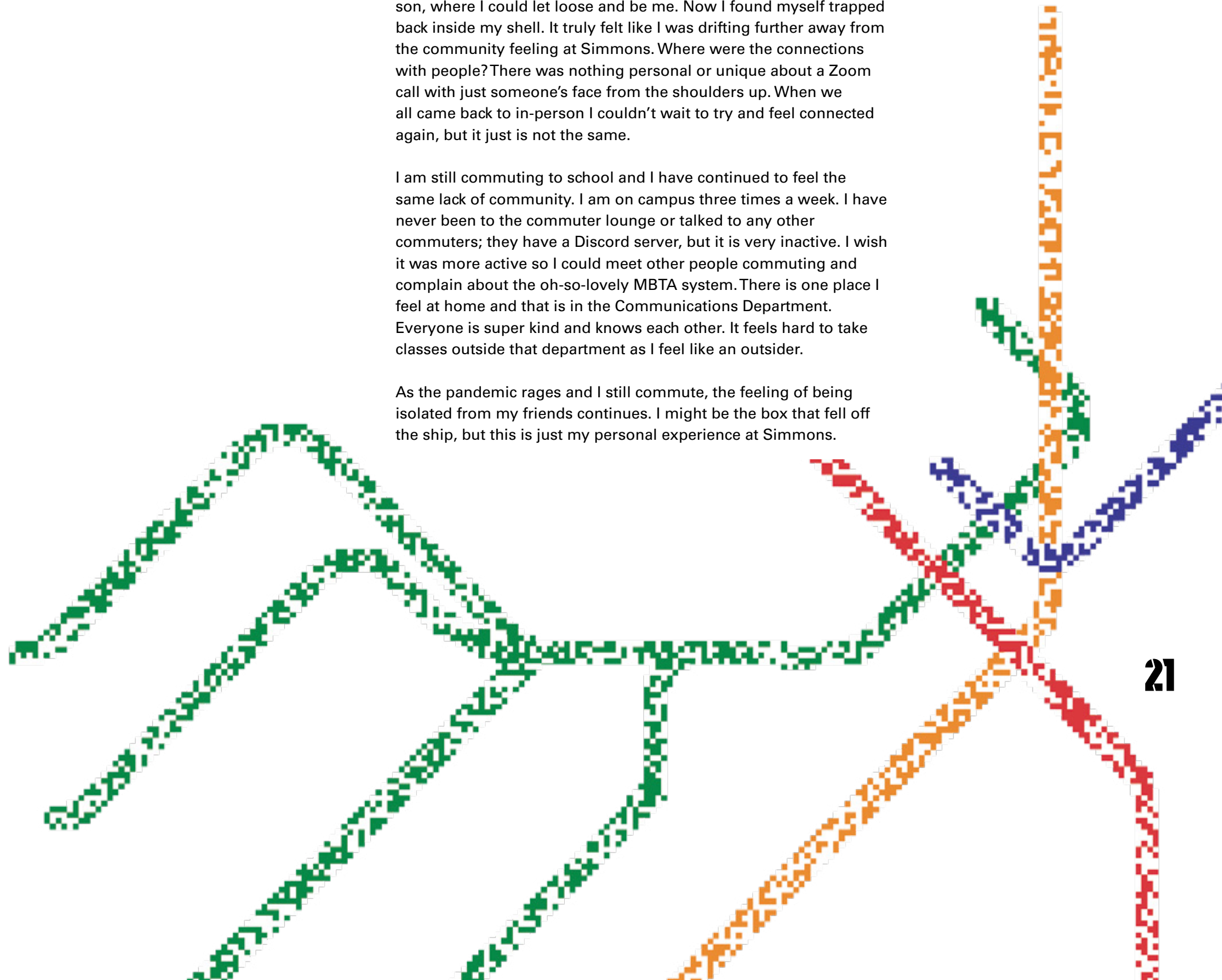
I became a commuter student at the start of my sophomore year when I moved back home. This decision was hard, but ultimately it had to happen. As the year went on, I did not get to see my friends as frequently. I couldn't go on spontaneous trips with anyone in the city anymore. Instead of taking late-night trips to Tasty Burger with friends, I was working, helping out around the house, or playing video games. I started to feel disconnected from all my Simmons friends. The longer I was a commuter student, the less I felt a part of the Simmons community. I felt like an outsider with the people who I cared about at school, someone on the sidelines who got to watch the game, but not play. As we moved into the Spring semester it got dramatically worse. Then the pandemic hit.

I remember going on Spring Break thinking about needing more time off so I could be on campus more often with my friends. That is when the isolation really hit me, and I constantly felt alone. For the

majority of the first year of the pandemic, I only saw my family and co-workers. Zoom classes completely killed any sort of natural interaction with other students. I could talk to my friends over Zoom or Skype, but school was the place I got to see all of them in person, where I could let loose and be me. Now I found myself trapped back inside my shell. It truly felt like I was drifting further away from the community feeling at Simmons. Where were the connections with people? There was nothing personal or unique about a Zoom call with just someone's face from the shoulders up. When we all came back to in-person I couldn't wait to try and feel connected again, but it just is not the same.

I am still commuting to school and I have continued to feel the same lack of community. I am on campus three times a week. I have never been to the commuter lounge or talked to any other commuters; they have a Discord server, but it is very inactive. I wish it was more active so I could meet other people commuting and complain about the oh-so-lovely MBTA system. There is one place I feel at home and that is in the Communications Department. Everyone is super kind and knows each other. It feels hard to take classes outside that department as I feel like an outsider.

As the pandemic rages and I still commute, the feeling of being isolated from my friends continues. I might be the box that fell off the ship, but this is just my personal experience at Simmons.



A Light in the Dark (room)

by dani caisse

It has been a tumultuous four years for the photography department.

In the spring of 2019, Simmons announced the “One Simmons” project to renovate the Academic campus and consolidate the university into one city block. It was not well received by students or faculty. However, while most students voiced anger about the loss of the Residential campus or concerns about how the Academic campus would operate under construction, the photography department began to panic about the darkroom on the third floor of Lefavour Hall, which is set to become science labs.

Simmons did not originally intend to keep the photo lab and only agreed to relocate it after Edie Bresler, the director of the photography program, and others lobbied to keep it.

“While many programs are eliminating the darkroom, we were able to convince them to keep it based on continued interest,” said Bresler. Often, administrators only make decisions on numbers and not on people, but



***E-girls* by senior Haley Jean, taken, developed, and printed in the Simmons darkroom in the spring of 2019.**



***Fabric Sale in the City* by senior Yasmeen Ibrahim, taken and edited in Adobe Photoshop from film scans in the spring of 2021.**

Department of Art and Music, such as the Trustman Art Gallery, art studios, and practice rooms.

Then, the pandemic interrupted everything.

Remote learning completely disrupted how Bresler and Professor Jaclyn Kain taught the Poetry of Photography. Since the pandemic closed campus, no one could use the darkroom, which is the foundation of analog photography.

“Not being able to teach the hands-on aspect of developing film and making prints was the hardest part of teaching remotely,” said Bresler. The photography department sent film cameras to students; however, students had to send their film out to labs for professionals to develop instead of developing their rolls themselves. They also had to edit their photos in Photoshop from scans instead of printing them in the darkroom.

The semesters that Simmons operated remotely were frustrating for the entire department. Everyone—students, TAs, and professors—felt as though they

Poetry of Photography—Simmons’ black and white film photography course—continues to fill every year.

Simmons agreed to relocate the lab, in which Bresler found the space for herself. The photo lab, which had been on the third floor of Lefavour since the early 2000s, was moved to the fourth floor of the Main College Building (MCB). The fourth-floor houses important spaces to the



***Hall* by Lennon Sherburne, taken, developed, and printed in the Simmons darkroom in the fall of 2021.**

missed out on a more fulfilling experience. "I felt like I was robbed of the experience of physically developing my photos in the darkroom," said Yasmeen Ibrahim, who took Poetry of Photography in the spring of 2021.

Construction in parts of the MCB began and finished while classes operated remotely, including the new photo lab.

Moving into the new photo lab has had its challenges. The new photo lab is smaller—it has 10 stations, instead of 12—which makes it impossible for the whole class to print in the darkroom at the same time. The space is also more cramped, with students bumping into each other and materials as they work. The 2021–2022 academic year has been a learning experience for professors and TAs, as both try to solve problems that the new space has caused.

The students who took Poetry of Photography online also found it hard to find their footing in the darkroom while taking advanced classes. "I felt like a dumb-ass," joked senior Hannah Bishop, who took Poetry of Photography in the fall of 2020. She felt frustrated in Advanced Black and White Photography because her printing skills were not where she wanted them to be.



Double Exposure Self-Portrait No.1 by senior Dani Caisse, taken, developed, and printed in the Simmons darkroom in the spring of 2022.

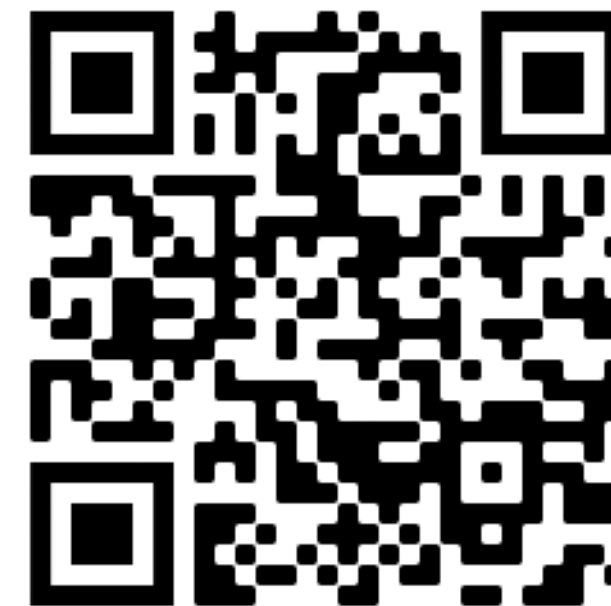
However, with the help of Bresler and her classmates, Bishop feels more confident in her skills in just a few short months.

Despite the challenges of the last four years, students have persevered and produced exceptional work. And, with thanks to Bresler and the others who lobbied for the preservation of the photo lab, students will be able to continue their work for years to come.



The Common in Spring by senior Ailia Rochefort, taken, developed, and printed in the Simmons darkroom in the fall of 2021.

Student Work



Click the above code to see online work submitted by the senior class!