



October 3, 2016

Dear Salt Alumni:

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to update you on Salt's new partnership with MECA, which is off to a successful start. Much has happened in the last six months that I want to share with you. We consider each of you an important part of our MECA alumni community and want you to feel welcome here at the College.

Out of respect for your time and the varied amount of detail each of you might prefer, I have written a shorthand summary ("THE SHORT VERSION") of the full letter below. For those interested in more details please see "THE LONG VERSION" below. All alumni are invited to our open forum on Oct 20 at 5:15 pm at MECA to discuss Salt.

I want to especially thank those of you who have written in support of our efforts to keep Salt alive. All of us at MECA take our role in securing Salt's future very seriously. I am honored to be part of continuing Salt's legacy. MECA and Salt share many complementary values, and I hope that each of you will be able to take time to get to know our College, our culture, our varied programs, and the reasons why Salt and MECA have so much in common. Salt is an important part of MECA's future. If you have never done so, please stop by and pay us a visit. (Email alums@meca.edu if you would like a tour of the school.) We are always proud to show visitors, and in your case now, alumni, our fiercely independent college, where we will very soon be showcasing Salt as well.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ian Anderson". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Ian Anderson
Vice President of Academic Affairs
and Dean of the College

www.meca.edu
www.meca.edu/salt
www.saltstoryarchive.org

THE SHORT VERSION

1. **Overall Plan:** The core of all of our decisions regarding Salt is to preserve the unique Salt experience.
2. **The Salt Story Archive:** YOUR story is here: <http://www.saltstoryarchive.org>.
3. **Accreditation:** MECA has received approval from its regional accreditor for the Salt Graduate Certificate in Documentary Studies.
4. **Program Launch:** The Salt semester program will recommence in Fall 2017 as the Salt Graduate Certificate in Documentary Studies and applicants can submit their materials starting Nov 1, 2016 at <https://www.meca.edu/salt/>.
5. **Salt Summer Workshops:** We successfully ran three Salt workshops at MECA this summer in Radio, Short Documentary Film, and Documentary Photography, all of which were a resounding success.
6. **The Salt Archive:** The Salt Archive has found a permanent home with the [Fogler Library](#) at the University of Maine in Orono, Maine.
7. **Public and Alumni Forum:** Scheduled for Oct 20 at 5:15 pm at MECA. Please RSVP here: <https://www.meca.edu/academics/graduate/salt/public-alumni-forum/>
8. **Advisory Committee:** In formation.
9. **Salt Instagram ID:** saltatmeca. Follow us!
10. **Faculty Search:** Positions will be posted in early October 2016.
11. **Alumni Survey: Where are You?** Please update your current contact information so we can integrate you into our alumni database and stay in touch with you about Salt. You can do this here: meca.edu/saltalumni.
12. **Alumni Benefits:** There are a number of alumni benefits which we are extending to Salt alumni.
13. **Soundbites:** Live Salt at MECA storytelling. Future dates are October 20th and November 18th at Frontier cafe and cinema (Brunswick, Maine). See facebook.com/SoundBitesME/ for more details.

THE LONG VERSION

1. Overall Plan

First and foremost, MECA's primary goal for Salt has been to preserve the unique Salt experience. In fact, it was the uniqueness of that experience that convinced us to do all we could to preserve the Salt Institute. We are relaunching Salt in Fall 2017 as the Salt Graduate Certificate in Documentary Studies, when it will again be offered as a semester-long experience twice a year.

Salt has clearly been a graduate-level experience. However, it never had accreditation.¹ By offering the program as a graduate certificate -- while at the same time preserving its immersive, experiential community-based ethics -- we can attract even more students to Salt,

¹ Salt was approved by the State of Maine in 2000 to offer a Master of Arts, but that is not considered being accredited in higher education. The six national accrediting bodies can be found here: <https://cihe.neasc.org/about-accreditation/regional-accrediting-commissions>.

enable students to receive federal financing to attend Salt, and award future students credits that can be transferred to other institutions. (MECA will not be able to retroactively issue credits or transcripts for past Salt students.)

MECA is changing Salt's administrative model. Faculty will chair the program and be supported by the administrative infrastructure of MECA as well as by a part-time studio technician. This is in line with best practices in higher education, and in line with how MECA's three other degree programs (MFA, MAT and BFA) are managed.

While Salt's core is the one-semester program, we also intend to run workshops, events and shows related to documentary studies, and to begin integrating Salt into our successful [Public Engagement program](#).

2. The Salt Story Archive

A major accomplishment of Salt's leadership before becoming part of MECA was the creation of the [Salt Story Archive](#). The Archive contains almost 16,000 images, 495 radio stories, 849 writing projects, 251 short documentary video projects, more than 500 articles in 56 publications, and three books, all created by over 1,000 Salt storytellers who have attended Salt since it began in 1973. This is an incredible resource for the people of Maine, the region and the world, and a testament to the power of storytelling. If you have yet to do so, please take the time to view, hear, watch or read your own story or the stories of your fellow alumni.

3. Accreditation

MECA is a fully accredited college. In order to begin a new academic program, an accredited college must have a plan for that program reviewed and approved by its accreditors. Accreditation is a voluntary system of accountability which comprehensively evaluates an institution. There are six primary national accrediting bodies, and four-year colleges must have accreditation in order for their students to have access to federal financial aid (Title IV funding).

MECA's regional accreditor is NEASC (the New England Association of Schools and Colleges), which accredits more than 2000 institutions. MECA also has accreditation through NASAD (the National Association of Schools of Art and Design), as NASAD is considered the highest standard of accreditation for art and design colleges. Put most simply, NEASC is our regional accreditor and NASAD is our professional accreditor.

Shortly after the MECA/Salt partnership was finalized, MECA submitted comprehensive proposals to both NEASC and NASAD. We are pleased to announce that, at the end of June, we received approval from NEASC to launch the Salt Graduate Certificate in Documentary Studies. NASAD is still in the process of reviewing our submitted documentation and will confer a final decision in October. Approval from MECA's accrediting bodies was the first but most important step towards integrating Salt into MECA, and this is where we have expended most of our focus in the last six months.

4. Program Launch

Many of you have been inquiring about the start of the full semester program. With both of our accreditors' approval we can formally market the program, begin accepting applicants, and hire faculty. We have developed a Salt-specific web page and are creating print materials to announce Salt's relaunch.

The first cohort of Salt semester students will enter the program in fall 2017. Applications will be accepted starting November 1, 2016, and we will complete our search for two new faculty no later than Spring 2017.

5. Salt Summer Workshops

This summer we launched three one-week intensive workshops through our Continuing Studies department. Three distinct courses were offered: Short Documentary Film, Radio, and Documentary Photography. Documentary Photography was taught by Salt alum Amy Toensing; Radio by former Salt instructor Michael May; and Short Documentary Film by Matt Moyer.

In short, the classes were a booming success, including a wait-list for radio program registrants. The course evaluations were extremely favorable and we will be offering the same workshops again this coming March 13-17, 2017. (These courses are not part of the graduate certificate.)

The short documentary film class included a Salt alum (Radio, 2006), who wrote a personal note at the end of class:

I am very pleased with my experience in the new Salt at MECA documentary workshop. It was nothing short of transformative for me.... As a Salt alum, I was initially skeptical about the Salt-MECA merger. But I am won over now. I am also incredibly grateful that, because Salt joined with MECA, an accredited school, I was able to utilize my soon-to-expire AmeriCorps education award to pay for the workshop and housing.... I had originally signed up for a summer film course at another nearby college, but they were not nearly as forthcoming or responsive to my requests and needs. You guys totally out-shined them.

6. The Salt Archive

The Salt Archive now encompasses two distinct collections. There is the online collection -- all final student projects and all Salt publications are now available online for the public and Salt alumni to view/hear/read. All this content is searchable and tagged with appropriate metadata. This differs from the physical Salt archives, which include original copies of all Salt publications; final students projects (in their analog form); and all research materials (also analog) from 1973 -- the year Salt was founded, up to and including 2008 -- when Salt shifted its content to a digital format. The physical archive encompasses roughly 1.5 million photographic negatives, tens of thousands of printed images, and thousands of hours of recorded interviews.

Salt's and MECA's administration, as well as Salt alums, were focused on the future care and location of Salt's physical archive. The archive was aging and required specialized care. We are very pleased to announce that the collection now has a permanent home with the [Fogler Library](#), a part of the University of Maine System located at the University of Maine's flagship campus in Orono, Maine. At the Fogler Library, the collection will be cared for with the proper facilities and experienced staff needed to maintain a collection of its size and value. The Fogler Library is also hoping to devote attention and resources into raising funds to continue digitizing the research portions of Salt's vast collection.

Salt alumni will continue to have individual access to the work they created simply by arranging to access the collection at Fogler. The Fogler Library has also agreed to honor the spirit of the work by respecting all fully executed previous restrictions for reuse cited on the release forms

and deposition agreements as well as by the student creators of the work. All publications and student projects can be found online as well through the [Salt Story Archive](#).

7. Public and Alumni Forum

When Salt entered into partnership with MECA, the College promised to host a forum about Salt to which Salt alumni would be invited. The forum will be held on Thursday, October 20, 2016, at 5:15 pm at MECA (522 Congress Street, Portland, Maine). The first half of the forum will address general questions about Salt and the second half will take the form of a discussion regarding the proposed curriculum for the new graduate certificate program. We will close with an optional tour of MECA, led by Dean Anderson. Please RSVP at <https://www.meca.edu/academics/graduate/salt/public-alumni-forum/> if you plan to attend.

8. Advisory Committee

The partnership agreement also stated that there would be an advisory committee. We have reserved at least two spots for current Salt Alumni Board members and we are looking to add more Salt alumni, leaders in the media fields that we teach (radio, photography, documentary film and writing), and interested community partners. The purpose of the committee is to ensure Salt makes a long-term contribution to documentary storytelling and stays true to its core values while simultaneously positioning the program as strongly as possible for the future. If you have suggestions for the committee, please email me at ianderson@meca.edu.

9. Salt Instagram

Follow us on @saltatmeca (and of course @mecaart). We will be looking to add content here in an ongoing way in the coming weeks and months and may be inviting alumni or other guests to take over the feed from time to time. Please help by following us and sharing our Instagram, Facebook and Twitter accounts with your own social media feeds.

10. Faculty Search

As mentioned, above, MECA is changing Salt's administrative model to one of teaching faculty. Faculty -- identified through the process of a national search -- will chair the program and be supported by the administrative infrastructure of MECA. The two position descriptions will be listed in early October, and we hope to finalize both hires no later than March 1, 2017. The positions will be posted on MECA's website and PDFs will be distributed to Salt alumni for help in distributing the position descriptions to qualified candidates.

11. Alumni Survey: Where are You?

Salt Alumni are important to us. We want your accurate information so we can send you updates on Salt and other College news, and integrate you into our institutional database. Please update your information at meca.edu/saltalumni or by emailing alums@meca.edu. We look forward to hearing from you.

12. Alumni Benefits

The following benefits are being immediately extended to all previous Salt Alumni:

- Opportunity to exhibit in the Charles C. Thomas Gallery in the Administration Center
- Borrowing privileges at the [Joanne Waxman Library](#)
- Inclusion in MECA's [Alumni Directory](#)
- A meca.edu email account. Please email alums@meca.edu to sign up for your account

- ❑ Access to MECA's online job board and ongoing professional development workshops through our [Artists at Work program](#) (requires MECA email account)
- ❑ Inclusion on MECA's Portfolio Site (requires MECA email account)
- ❑ Inclusion in *MECA Magazine* Alumni Class Notes
- ❑ As we continue to integrate Salt, we will consider Salt alumni needs in our institutional and Artists at Work program planning
- ❑ Discounts on homeowners and auto insurance through [Liberty Mutual Insurance Company](#)

13. Soundbites

Earlier this year, Salt began a collaboration with the venue Frontier, in Brunswick, Maine, and The Corner, a live storytelling series in Lewiston, Maine. Our goal was to showcase great storytelling by inviting local and regional storytellers and Moth MainStage and GrandSlam champions, and by including stories from Salt's 43-year archive of student work.

Once a month, between May and November, we present a two-hour live event. Shows are videotaped and recorded (an edited one-hour version is broadcast on MPBN). To date, the first five shows of the series have all sold out. Local press coverage has been highlighted through print and online media as well as through the popular local magazine news show, *207* (WCSH Channel 6). Generous sponsorship from Allagash Brewing helped us bring Moth storytellers from as far as Detroit, Burlington, Vermont, and New York City. If you are in the area, please join us for one or both of our final events of the series. Information can be found on the Sound Bites Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/SoundBitesME/> as well as through Frontier's event listings.

I look forward to hearing from you. Please fill out the alumni form and RSVP to the open forum if you plan on coming on October 20. I hope to see you there.

Sincerely,



Ian Anderson
Vice President of Academic Affairs
and Dean of the College

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