Can't see future...

Students and Friends,

To-day is issued the first number of our paper, and although we tremble at the thought of the work before us, we begin it gladly.

We believe that the same public spirit that founded THE TECH will sustain it to the end.

The Institute has never been rich in papers. Only one, we tremble at the thought of the varied voices which may arise on any given issue.

To the Staff and Editors of THE TECH:

Congratulations on bringing THE TECH into its second century. Not only is the paper the oldest student activity on campus (if you don't count "hacking" and other such informal pursuits), it is a vital force in creating community among all who live and work here -- students, faculty, and staff.

Besides printing news of interest and importance to our community, the paper has become a forum for the varied voices which may arise on any given issue. As you know, I don't always agree with the views expressed in your paper, but what kind of university would we be without the dialectic generated by differing perspectives and assumptions? If there is anything I've learned in my thirty years as an MIT citizen, it is that this place and its people flourish by challenging old truths and creating new paradigms for understanding ourselves and our world. This spirit is embodied in THE TECH -- a tradition that serves us all.

Here's to the second hundred years!

Sincerely yours,

Paul E. Gray
President

November 16, 1881

...but must look to the past

MIT's history is rife with tales of notable personalities, memorable accomplishments, and divisive controversies. Even a cursory examination of the historical record reveals that these stories follow a pattern. If there is a lesson to be learned from these pages, it is this: MIT's history is cyclical.

The repetitive nature of MIT events is not obvious to its student population, which turns over every four years. The short length of stay and the difficulty of work give students little chance to gain perspective on their experiences at the Institute.

A newspaper can play an important role in establishing continuity in such an inherently disjointed environment. Throughout its century-long existence, THE TECH has tried to provide an accurate record of the personalities and events which have combined to form the history of the Institute. Each board of editors has had as its primary objective thorough coverage of current MIT events. The collective efforts of these students provide a surprisingly complete history of the Institute.

Only on rare occasions can a student find the time to examine MIT's historical treasures. The one hundredth anniversary of the Institute's undergraduate newspaper fortuitously provides such an opportunity. The experience has been enlightening and rewarding. The review was especially encouraging because it revealed that, for the most part, THE TECH has been effective in both reporting major MIT events and providing a forum in which to discuss their implications.

The journalist's dual tasks of objective news gathering and thoughtful interpretation are especially difficult for student newspapers to achieve. These newspapers often bear the extra responsibility of journalistic monopoly. The TECH has been MIT's sole newspaper for most of the history of the Institute. In addition, the newspaper is a student activity for most of its staff, and so must provide them with opportunity for enjoyment and relaxation.

The mere attainment of a hundredth anniversary supports the conclusion that THE TECH has had some success as both a newspaper and an activity. As with MIT's history, this success has been cyclical. Distinctive peaks of detailed investigative reporting have alternated with debilitating valleys of notably poor journalism. These cycles of the Institute and THE TECH will, we hope, continue indefinitely. MIT's history often appears, to each set of students passing through it, as a disjointed series of conflicts. The following pages reveal that MIT's solid base of individual effort and institutional persistence has proven sufficient to resolve those dichotomies. We hope that THE TECH has contributed to that success.