The Future of Mobility at the Chicago Humanities Festival

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Our global automotive industry has an ever-evolving climate. The fad is now frictionless, automated and personalized travel. A future mobility system is pivoted around driverless vehicles and shared mobility. Let us thus explore an algorithm-led car industry.

With ubiquitous computing, our transport system is constantly improving. 1908: Ford's Model-T debuted as an automobile with a steering wheel, four tires and seats. Today, Henry Ford would be baffled by the new technology under the hood. Automotive digitization has led to important transformations. Adaptive cruise control, automatic parallel parking, collision warnings, and more are already widespread car technology.

Indeed, full-fledged self-driving vehicles already exist. They are transforming cities. But what are their worth? The answer is actually locked with the rapid societal and urban transformations. Today, it is possible to gather real-time information, seamlessly, on every dimension of urban life. HubCab, for instance, is a web-based interactive visualization that shows how New York's 170 million annual taxi trips connect the city.

Self-driving vehicles are also described as 'the next revolution of the roadway by the US Department of Transportation (DOT). This body wants to experiment with "cheaper, faster safer, greener, more efficient, and more convenient transportation for citizens (Scott Corwin et. al 2016)." A wide range of intermodal innovations is thus commercially viable. Nevada, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Florida are among the states whereby prototypes of the mobility ecosystem are implemented in pilot-phases.

John Zimmer, co-founder of Lyft, had envisaged the autonomous vehicle as a 'transformative force' to reshape our congested cities. Laura Forlano, an associate professor at Institute of Design at Illinois Tech, shares the same view. Recently, at the Chicago Humanities Festival, she joined Travis Lee, the managing director at the design firm IDEO, to discuss the evolution of the transportation system. With a driverless city in mind, her design for the transportation system was that of an intermodal innovation.

An intermodal transportation system scenario is like this: Bill is someone who commutes to college. He takes a bus to get to a train station. Getting off the train, Bill takes either a bike ride or a car share to reach college.

IHS Markit Limited, a firm feeding insights and forecasts about the sales of autonomous cars, including driver control, speculates that by 2050 almost all vehicles will be driverless. Ultimately, the future of mobility will be shaped by the advent of driverless cars. The world's mobility challenges will henceforth increasingly be met with silicon rather than asphalt.

WIIT hosts Open House, ChinaRose performs
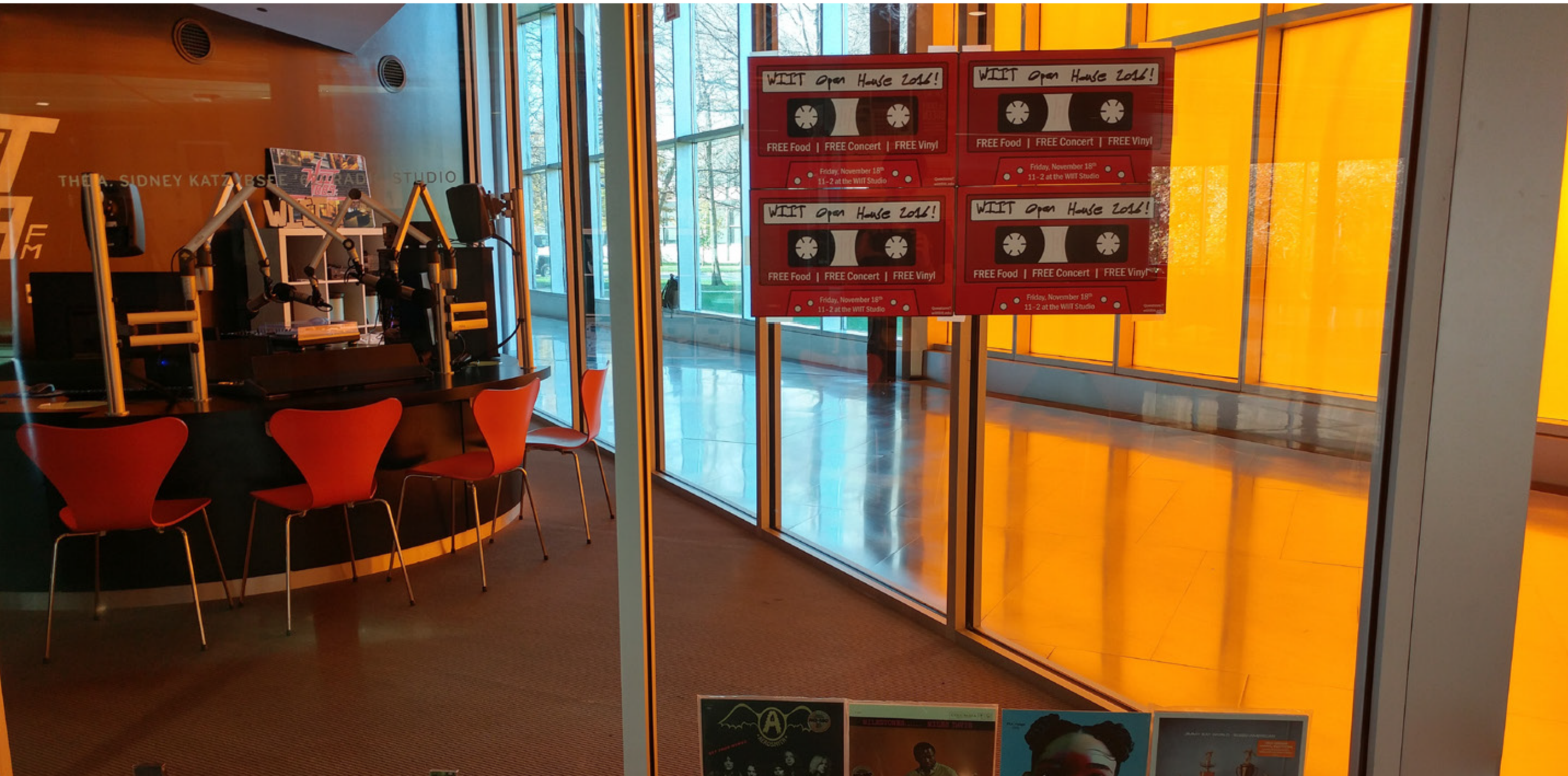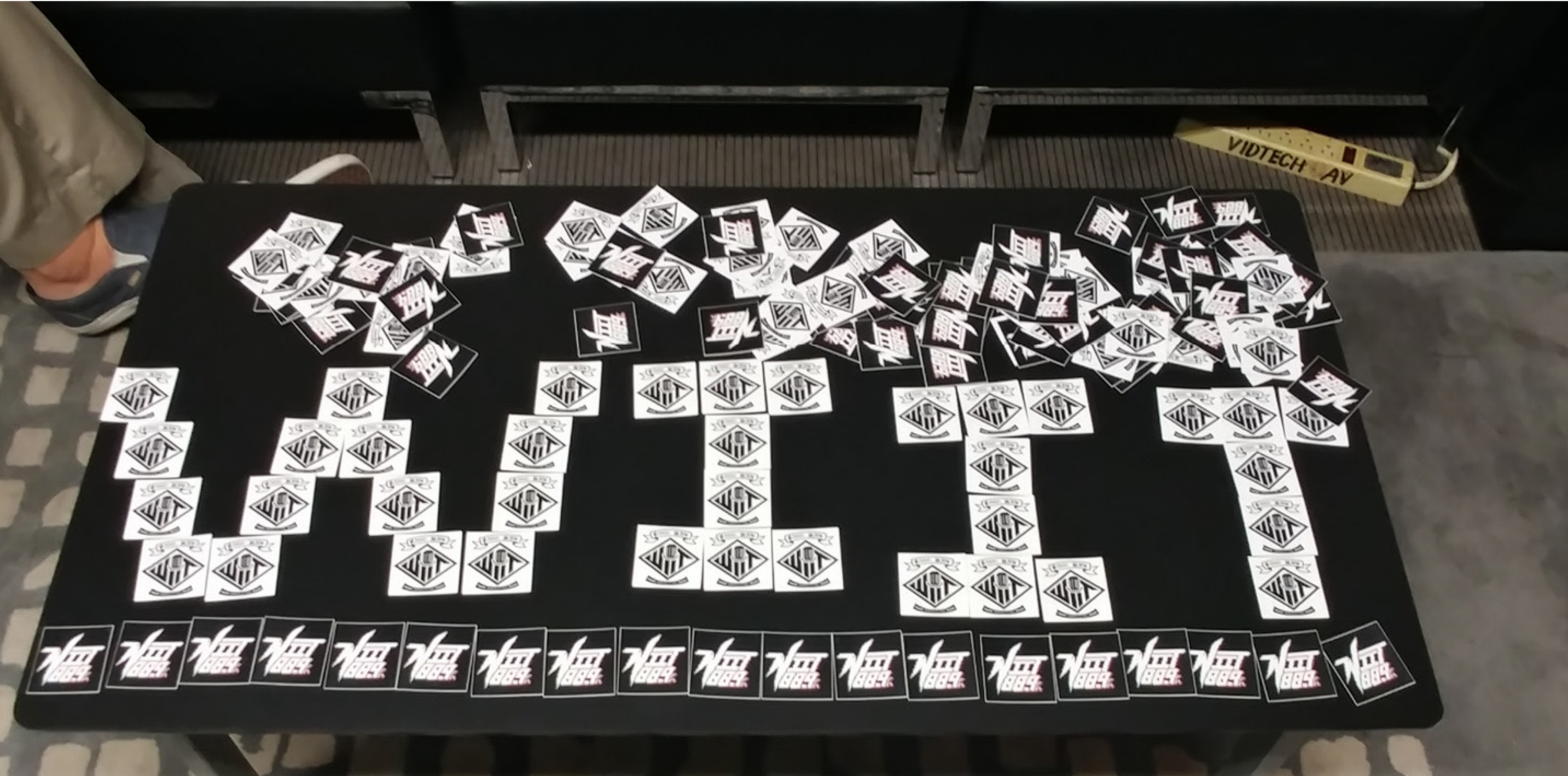
Photos by Soren Spicknall

Illinois Tech A Cappella hosts once-a-semester concert

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