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- recent
- research
- campus
- by topic
- events
- archives
- in the news

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- e-news
- tech talk
- news releases
- rss feeds

services

- request images
- submit news
- promote news
- media inquiries

about us

- news office info
- MIT background
- contact



Two Scientists named to Discover's 'Top 20 Under 40' list

Elizabeth A. Thomson, News Office
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Discover magazine has named two MIT researchers -- Ed Boyden and Sara Seager -- among its top 20 scientists under 40.

Boyden, the Benesse Career Development Professor, an assistant professor in the MIT Media Lab and professor in the Department of Biological Engineering and Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences, is currently working on devising technologies for controlling the processing within specific neural circuit targets in the brain. Boyden, 29, is also an alumnus of MIT, receiving his MEng and dual SBs in 1999.

Discover cited Boyden for his work on "engineering brain implants that can stimulate ... with light pulses," which he hopes could help treat brain diseases including Parkinson's.

"There are things that light can do that purely electric stimulators can't," Boyden noted in the magazine.

Seager, 36, the Ellen Swallow Richards Associate Professor of Planetary Science and an associate professor of physics, was cited for her work on the study of extrasolar planets and models that have "helped researchers make the first atmospheric measurements of a distant world."

"What I really want to do is figure out which kinds of gases extraterrestrial life might produce," Seager told Discover. "These gases would accumulate in the atmosphere and might be detectable from afar."

Seager, who joined MIT in 2007, was also part of a team that co-discovered the first detection of light emitted from an exoplanet and the first spectrum of an exoplanet.

The "Top 20 Under 40" list appears in the magazine's December issue. Institute Professor emeritus Noam Chomsky was also cited in the same issue as a lifetime achiever who has "redefined our understanding of ourselves as humans."



Photo / Donna Coveney

Ed Boyden [Enlarge image](#)



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Sara Seager [Enlarge image](#)

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77 massachusetts avenue
cambridge, ma 02139-4307

617-253-2700
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