

DOCUMENT SERVICES

ANNUAL REPORT, 1999-2000

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

For system-wide positive impact on both patrons and staff, nothing can compete with this year's **replacement of all the public copiers**. And for impact that extends beyond the campus walls – in fact, to the far reaches of the globe – our new **electronic thesis delivery service** takes the prize. These, plus a host of other projects and initiatives – all important, but of a more parochial nature – are described below. Read on!

NEW PUBLIC COPIERS

There could hardly be a more sensitive issue to library patrons – and by extension to the public services staff – than the presence and state of the public copiers. It is the topic of some of the most heated exchanges among all the parties, and a seemingly endless source of complaints. Against this high-stakes backdrop, we as the service providers face a barrage of choices, all of which represent tradeoffs and compromises of one sort or another.

The MIT Libraries now have a new fleet of copiers, installed in stages over the course of the past year, which we hope now provides the reliability and the features that our patrons want and need. Rather than selecting a single type of copier that could serve all locations effectively – as we have usually done in the past – we decided to buy a mix of machines that were better suited to the wide volume variations among the libraries. These volume variations, coupled with patron demands for advanced features, our desire to move from analog to digital copier technology, and our disenchantment with the general state of vendor service, all moved us toward a new model for the fleet: matching volume and features specifically to the library location, and spreading our “risk” of simultaneous equipment and service failure among multiple vendors. Of course the downside of this model lies in the increased complexity of dealing with three different vendors and types of copier. At the same time, we eliminated coin boxes from the copiers in Hayden, Barker and Dewey by lowering the base cost of a copy card to one dollar. This change decreases breakdowns as well as the burden of counting and depositing coins. Although a few patrons – primarily outside users – would prefer to be able to use coins for their occasional copy or two, the vast majority are served very well by this change. It is far too early to tell whether this new paradigm of copier service will prove better in the long run, but the results to date are very promising. What is clear is that a painful year of transition is behind us, and that we have every reason to expect a period of relative calm and contentment among all parties. I salute the patience of the patron community and public services staff, and the hard work of the DS copier staff who made this improvement happen.

ELECTRONIC THESES

A good deal of progress was made in the area of electronic theses, most notably in our ability to deliver them electronically, the growth in size of our online collection, the external recognition of MIT as a leader in this area, and the building of partnerships with outside organizations which hold promise for the future of our collection.

In a service formally launched last November, we have sent more than 600 MIT theses to patrons around campus and all over the world via electronic delivery. The demand for such a service had been growing steadily since we first introduced the MIT Library of Digital Theses (LDT) two years ago. I/S developer Larry Stone built the e-delivery functionality into the thesis server so that DS staff can now send a title from the online collection in a matter of minutes to anyone with a reasonably good network connection. The e-thesis is converted from TIFF images to Adobe PDF (Portable Document Format), and then placed in an FTP pickup box on the thesis server. An email message with a link to the waiting thesis alerts the patron to its “delivery”. We provide this service for free to members of the MIT community, and charge \$20 to those outside MIT. If a thesis is requested which isn't already online, we are glad to add it to the collection – again, with an extra charge to the outside community but free for anyone at MIT. The size of the online collection has now topped 4,000 titles.

Two important outside alliances were formed over the course of the year which position MIT to benefit from increased visibility, technical development, and enhanced searchability of our materials. First is that of formally joining the Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (NDLTD), a national federation of schools working to promote the development of electronic theses. See <http://www.ndltd.org/> Led by Edward Fox, an MIT

alumnus and faculty member at Virginia Tech, the NDLTD has long been seeking to add MIT to its list of members. Our joining represented a boost of stature for the federation, an acknowledgement of the leadership role which MIT plays in the e-thesis arena, and it promises to present opportunities for us to share in future development, much of which is supported by partnerships with industry. It required no costs or compromises on MIT's part. As new members of the NDLTD, we presented two papers at the *Third International Symposium on Electronic Theses and Dissertations*, held at the University of South Florida last March. The papers can be found at our e-thesis Web site: <http://thesis.mit.edu> Although we are not currently emphasizing electronic *submission* of new theses at MIT, we continue to accept them passively from students who are so inclined. See <http://web.mit.edu/etheses/www/etheses-home.html>

The second alliance put into place this year was a license signed with the Software Patent Institute (SPI), a non-profit organization which publishes a database of research materials on the topic of software design. See <http://www.spi.org/> Owing to the high regard with which MIT theses are held and the pervasiveness of software topics throughout the collection, SPI approached us to ask if they could include entries for all theses from our online collection in their database, with direct links to our online version. In the process of adding MIT titles to their database, SPI is creating text versions of the thesis abstracts, and will return a copy to us so they can be added to our online bibliographic records. Since our current records contain no subject headings of any kind, this initiative represents a major improvement in the quality of our bibliographic information.

Two major challenges lie ahead in e-theses this coming year: to extend the valuable bibliographic enhancement beyond the separate database that accompanies the online collection – in other words, to the Barton records – with the long-term goal of eliminating the separate database altogether; and to add whole groups of new theses to the online collection, not just titles which have been specifically requested. Both of these ideas will need to involve other library departments – BAS and Archives – in addition to DS, and if successful, both will lead to significant improvements in access to new MIT theses.

STAFF

Comings:

- Beth Burke, Senior Office Assistant
- Bill Guarente, Technical Assistant
- Anthony Hudson, Technical Assistant
- Christine Quirion, Technical Supervisor

Goings:

- Michael Ciaglo, Section Head/Microfiche
- Marc Desrosiers, Senior Office Assistant
- Tiffany Russ-Rizki, Technical Assistant

It was a key goal last year to fill the Technical Supervisor position vacated by Bill Comstock in June of 1999, and that goal was realized with the appointment of Christine Quirion in February of 2000. It was also especially important to fill two vacancies in the production area: those of the Copier Assistant (Anthony Hudson) and the Local Technology Expert (Bill Guarente), the latter position also playing a coordinating role with copiers, among other things.

Michael Ciaglo's retirement in May ended his 33-year career in the department, the past fifteen of which were focused on microfiche production. Rather than searching for a full-time replacement, we chose instead to increase the hours of Jim Paton and reallocate some of his duties among remaining staff. At the same time, we ceased taking on some of the film and fiche work which, although of moderate volume in recent times, was clearly dropping way off, and had ceased to be a significant component of the department's operations. What we have retained is the core task of producing preservation fiche for all new MIT theses, and we have trimmed the size of the production staff by half a position. There are bound to be times in the future when we need to supplement this workforce, but that will be possible to do with students, temporary workers, or small increases in work hours for the existing staff.

There were two changes in the front office: first was the departure of Marc Desrosiers in April and his replacement by Beth Burke in June. Second was the promotion of Tim Sheehan to a new position of Section Head – Customer Service. This was done in an effort to consolidate the responsibility for coordinating our customer service into a single position – most often needed when something has gone wrong and requires serious attention to sort out. We hope this will provide a more effective means to resolving such problems.

INVOLVEMENT IN PUBLIC SERVICES INITIATIVES

- Document Delivery Task Force – Joan Thompson chaired this committee which took a comprehensive look at the topic as a result of the Public Services Redefinition Process. Their charge and the resulting recommendations focus primarily on document delivery as it relates to the MIT community, as opposed to the outside community. Although no decisions have yet been made on implementation of the recommendations, there are a number of relevant features which may impact Document Services.
- Electronic Reserves – Various department staff were involved throughout the year in the Libraries' pilot project to test the feasibility of e-reserves at MIT. DS tasks focused mainly on the scanning and file uploading portions of the process.
- Fee-Based Public Printing – The Libraries have decided to put an end to free public printing, since it represents a growing drain on resources. DS has been asked to play a role in the planning, implementation and support of a new system (UnipriNT) which will use the same copy cards as the public photocopiers. Local support will be shared by DS and Systems staff.

UPDATED IN-HOUSE DATABASE

Work was completed on the first of two phases of upgrade to the Microsoft Access program which provides our customer database and order-entry functions. The primary purpose of the first phase was to insure Y2K compatibility. An outside consultant was retained to make the changes to the program, but the transition required a great deal of planning and testing by the DS staff. Although many of the true enhancements are planned for the second phase of work – this year – last year's work improved performance dramatically, as well as solving a few minor functionality problems.

NEW SERVER WITH A NEW HOME

With the replacement of our Novell server at the beginning of the year, we moved not only to the NT network platform but also to a new home for the server itself: the Systems Office Server Room. DS has long had an excellent relationship with Systems staff, although a bit more removed than other departments. The relatively high level of technical expertise residing in our own staff – because of filming and scanning equipment – made the need for close involvement and support from Systems rare. And dependence on our own funding for computing equipment made it unnecessary for Systems staff to have intimate knowledge of our technical needs and issues. All of this worked fine until we began losing key technical staff to other jobs, and until the notion of closer ties with Systems began to sound like the best way to integrate DS into the computing mainstream of the Libraries and the Institute. In addition to greater "security" for DS, it has facilitated experimentation with some products such as Zetafax and Prospero, which otherwise might have been difficult to get into use in other library departments.

MISCELLANEOUS

- Film scanner enhancement – At the request of a faculty member in EECS, we purchased an added feature for our Canon digital reader-printer which allows the digitized images to be saved to file, rather than simply printed on paper.
- Secure online credit card system – MIT has finally decided on a solution to the need for an enterprise-wide secure credit card system. We have been told to expect the service to begin by the end of this summer. Many of our email customers already use credit card to pay for their requests, but we must gather that information by fax or phone. This enhancement will allow the entire transaction – ordering and payment – to occur online.
- E-Mail management – We began testing the use of the IMAP server in Systems (already used by Barker, RSC and ILB) as an intermediate step as we move toward identifying and implementing a more comprehensive e-mail management package.

VOLUME OF BUSINESS

Many areas of business saw a decline in volume this year, from article and technical report delivery to copiers and even P-Card sales (the last being Library, not DS revenue). The one bright spot was theses, where we made our first volume gain in three years (+15%). The thesis volume gain was not matched in revenue, however, due to the popularity of electronic thesis delivery, the cost and revenue of which is much lower than paper or microform. Much of the drop in the document delivery areas came in the second half of the year, and corresponds to the general trend of less demand due to increased online access. We believe, however, that we can do a better job of retaining the customers and orders that we do have by restructuring our workflow, ultimately to increase our fill rate. There continues to be a substantial demand for special rush services, and it is those services that give us the highest return on our cost. We plan to modify the design of our service so as to maximize our ability to respond effectively to such requests, while still filling regular orders in an adequate time frame.

MAJOR PLANS FOR THE COMING YEAR

- Begin to add groups of new theses to the online collection.
- In conjunction with BAS, add abstracts and URLs to electronic thesis records wherever possible.
- Improve functionality and searchability of the e-thesis Website.
- Modify the design of the office side of our document delivery operation and our model of customer service.
- Carry out a pilot project in the area of desktop article delivery to MIT patrons.
- Carry out the second phase of upgrade to enhance the usability of our in-house database.
- Make progress toward implementing an automated e-mail management system.
- Participate in the implementation of the pay-for-print system throughout the Libraries.

COMPUTERIZED LITERATURE SEARCH SERVICE

(from Mary Pensyl)

- Consulted with the head of the Univ. of Singapore's new technology licensing office re setting up a research facility for intellectual property research.
- Was a speaker at the IAP patent seminar (with Carol Robinson and Jack Turner, Technology Licensing Office).
- Participated in the Libraries' celebration of licensed e-journals and databases and the Reference Forum.
- By invitation, attended a two day Convocation of Technology Licensees, sponsored by MIT's Technology Licensing Office.
- Wrote a section on CLSS for the new Alumni/ae Website and revised ILP's Web page information on the service.
- Attended a number of local conferences, including the VRD Conference, "Reference in the New Millennium", the Dialog annual update, the annual NENON conference and New England ACRL/NEC and SLA annual conferences.