

MIT Libraries, Session Five Notes
Thursday, December 4, 2008

Job Satisfaction:

- Public services
- Web/webmaster – input
- Colleagues
- Students and staff
- Work with collections
- Close-up look at research
- Opportunity for special projects
- Research support
- Tasks/projects
- MIT in general
- The challenge and opportunity
- Job is never boring
- Variety of opinions and collaboration

Example of Departments Represented:

- Engineering and sciences, document services, Lincoln Lab, Dewey, desktop support, tech. operations, serials cataloguing, annex, acquisitions and licensing, Barker engineering, Rotch, administrative services, collection management services, video projections

Forces and Trends:

- User preference/comfort with online rather than print
- Google
- New uses for space
- Technology: solution vs. fetish
- Growing institutional collaboration
- Changes in outsider user behavior and expectations
- The financial situation
- Ease of discovery
- Interdisciplinary research and how it affects basic structure – services/funds
- Digital content device
- Information → search for meaning
- IP law – lock down content
- Increased use of non-text formats e.g. images
- Digital preservation

- Changes to model of publication
- Change in structure of information industry
- Complicate reference questions
- Students working in collaborative teams
- Open vs. restricted access
- Knowledge of search options online
- Keeping up with “the Harvards” and other institutions
- Generation of massive amounts of research data
- Educational initiatives and changing pedagogy
- Access to digital content globally
- Demand/need for digital storage
- Expectations – instant gratification, everything online
- Rapid change in media and technology
- Cost of information products and assessing “best buy”

Strengths:

- User ties/knowledge of user needs – collaboration, faculty ties, engaged users (ibex tool bar and other library beta competitors, open dialogue (suggestion boxes, surveys)
- Collection – a very targeted, but flexible, collection (physical and digital)
- Staff – conscience, dedicated, energized, subject specialists, responsive
- Instruction/training and teaching – excellent and varied, outreach → value of instruction

Weaknesses:

- Staff issues – not enough program and system design support, not enough staff to accomplish everything, staff workplaces not always appropriate for work being done, librarians need to “do it all”
- Meta issues – communication in all directions, resistance to change
- Decision-making – planning without input from all affected units, no “buy in,” too many meetings and not enough decisions, too much reliance on ideas that users will browse in significant quantities, decisions based on real data, not assumptions

Opportunities:

- Using existing data better – use financial troubles to weed out services and resources users don’t need or use
- Developing and influencing services in new areas

- Collaboration with others, internally and externally
- Money for innovation – seeking more grants to support ideas
- Utilizing the strength of the staff

Threats:

- Rise and fall of nation and state
- Rare, highly disruptive events e.g. terrorism, decay, hurricanes, mass earthquakes – need to be aware of possible disasters
- Legal – money, where do we put all the books? Legal and financial constraints may affect ability to make major changes
- Goole-zon – Librarians need to assert their expertise

Learning/Skill Needs:

- Better information management tools and organization – too many silos, need organization that is more holistic, broader knowledge of information life cycle
- Better tools and the training to use them/Upgrade staff skills and know who has them – training, appreciation of old technologies, librarian job descriptions may require a professional or advanced degree (salaries would need to commensurate)

Trends in relation to...

Technology:

- The rapid growth and change of technology impacts deployment of staff and the way staff complete their work. It impacts users in that they expect technology to anticipate their needs.

Students:

- Students (end users) expect digital access/discovery of library materials (and beyond). On the web, discovery of “good information” **seems** easier...but is it?
- What is the pedagogical role of the library? Encourage growth/critical thinking or just satisfice?
- Variety of users - graduate vs. undergraduate
 - How do we meet all the needs?

Faculty:

- As funding changes (facilities and Libraries), Libraries must adapt

- Library must adapt to changing methods of publication and communication among faculty; make results available and accessible

Library:

- Since more information is online, Libraries will be able to keep fewer books and journals in centrally located library spaces. This will free space for Libraries to create user-friendly, collaborative and community space. Financial constraints may delay progress in this area.

University:

- Finances – maintain excellence
- Competition
- Collaboration
- Open access

Desired Future State: (Vital Characteristics)

- More people in tech. and web services
- Financially robust
- Use data better to make evidence-based decisions to make choices
- Follow users wherever they are
- 24 hour access to space and services, including infrastructure to support teaching, learning, and collaboration
- More fluid collaboration outside of committees to get things done
- Creative and supportive staff and ways to keep them engaged – means to keep at MIT
- Ongoing renovation of space, including printed material
- Provide better service; seamless service integrated across Libraries
- Comfortable welcome space
- Provide a way to search MIT collections through a single interface and by using a single set of those skills
- Reallocate physical space to meet the needs of users' collections and staff
- Create more inter-disciplinary approach to Libraries (do discipline-specific places still work?)...Maybe more idea/service specifics...? E.g. DIS, technology
- Better integration of the Library in the classroom
- Well-informed staff, better communication, and decision-making process
- More digital content and access via mobile devices/platforms

Session Feedback:

- Questions ahead of time would have been helpful
- Heterogeneous groups – great idea
- SWOT, switching groups was helpful