

MIT Libraries, Session One Notes
Friday, November 21, 2008

Job Satisfaction:

- Client interaction
- Working with difficult problems; intelligent people
- Libraries → pleasure resource/variety of resources
- Support network
- Streamline procedure/process
- Providing the best access available
- Collaborative database (Architectural Engineering)
- Usability testing
- Helping patrons directly
- Variety of people to work with
- Ability to see the results of your research
- Incorporating MIT initiatives; getting things accomplished
- Working with high-level people
- Problem-solving

Example of Departments Represented:

- Electronic journals, circulation, cataloguing, communications, the annex, web resources, institute archives, AMPS, services

Forces and Trends:

- Increasing emphasis on interdisciplinary research
- International linkages
- Changing pedagogy/use of multi-media
- Circulations decreasing a bit
- In-house lower, e-journals higher
- Visits/occupancy slightly down
- Reference questions trending down
- Instruction up
- ILB requests up
- Unique hosts served by website is up
- Accessing resources electronically
- Economics (U.S. and worldwide)
- Overall media usage
- Helping users with technology beyond traditional library
- Help users manage their own “stuff”
- Only using most recent information

- Expectations being shared by competition
- Quality of research may suffer from lack of diving into hidden reaches
- Working with preliminary vs. published products
- Users need information that is not published
- Changing nature of copyright
 - The expectation that MIT be “cutting edge”
 - Digital material at risk
- Mobile technology
 - Access to resource
 - Interfaces
- Outsource commodities
- Manage what I’ve found
- Staff-electronically savvy
- Google trend
 - Greater competition
- Interdisciplinary of study
- User-independence
- Library space change
- Change in academic world
 - Digital options

Most Important Forces/Trends/Implications:

- User-behavior
- Economic force
- Keeping up with technology
- Increased need for organizational agility
- What does it mean to be a repository of information?
- Shift in purpose of general library space
- Demand for broader staff skills
- Embed libraries into the teaching process
- Passive → proactive
- Allow for imperfection

Key Strategic Issues:

- Create spaces that are flexible enough to evolve with time
- Data must be portable/flexible/archival to move into the future
- Change management: flexibility and adaptability (skills, emotional, technical)
- Faster, better, cheaper (while retaining quality – project management)
- Focus on users and instruction

- Librarians will need to integrate with other teams on and off campus, and support for staff's interdisciplinary needs
- Re-tooling current staff and bring others in
- Thinking about bringing out hidden collections that are unique
- Googlization of search (with flexibility going forward)
- Take advantage of developing technologies
- Capturing MIT content (storing, managing, preserving and access)
- Evaluate services

Strengths: Individual Responses

- Libraries are good at accomplishing a lot with a little
- Smart, hardworking, caring people
- Very good staff
- Good at improving team process
- Great collections
- Improving services
- Dedicate problem-solvers
- Great resources, tools and services
- Willingness to experiment and try new things
- Respected by institute
- User-focused for the most part
- Determination
- Ability to purvey information (not technological)
- Interest in details
- Organizing information of all sorts

Group Consensus:

- Staff
- Collections
- Organized
 - Information
 - Services
- Resourcefulness and commitment

Weaknesses: Individual Response

- Projects take too long to plan and execute; lack of nimbleness in this process
- Not good at giving things up
- Different levels of technical expertise

- Sometimes try and do too many things simultaneously; it may be better to prioritize
- Don't market what we offer as well as we could
- Too many meetings
- User-services, especially on access services
- Process-too slow to make decisions
- User space in some libraries
- Not enough specialized disciplinary knowledge
- Integrating instruction into classes
- Time to develop and implement any changes
- Limited Libraries budget
- Current economic situation
- Very high expectations
- Lack of agility; unable to act quickly
- Viewing ourselves too narrowly-not seeing bigger picture at MIT
- Redundant and inconsistent processes
- Lack of good data about activities

Group Consensus:

- Slowness
- Lack of reliable data
- Viewing role too narrowly
- Inability to "give up"/adjust to priorities

Opportunities:

- More staff; training
- Student workers
- Learn new skills
- Rethink traditional librarian duties/roles
- More/better information sharing among staff
- Use human resources to maximum capabilities
- Seen as equals in academic community
- Host outside initiatives
- Build upon training in information gathering
- Scholarly investigation
- Broad understanding of journals and databases available at MIT
- Resources are there, just need to reposition in services industry
- Organization skills
- New blood from library school
- Support new projects/collaborative ideas

- Become a more public face for MIT – create information and content
- Open source tools for OPAC improvements
- More technology/programming support for Libraries
- Potential to reach millions of users online
- Easier information sharing and retrieval – changing technology
- RFID – find-ability and fast circulation
- Many great new tools outside Libraries that can be integrated
- Provide faster access through new technology

Threats:

- Losing customers
- Unrealistic user expectations
- Decreasing user base in traditional library spaces
- Aging facilities
- People will find resources they need outside the Libraries
- Technological services change so fast that current staff is left out of the loop and does not receive training
- The changing technology disrupts business-as-usual
- Doing too many things at once and not managing it well
- Skill sets and distribution
- Project management
- Understanding of projects
- Quick re-evaluation – check if on right path
- Loss of books that are never re-published, pieces of history
- Rising collection costs
- Resistance to change
- Expanding services from Google
- More digital resources online from non-Library providers
- Loss of data due to improper storage
- Budgets for pilot projects
- Budget cuts
- Finances: freeze hiring or buying collections – competitors have easier-to-use services
- Management disconnect
- Staffing/staff re-training/job loss/departures

Desired Future State: Group

- E-library ubiquitous; the MIT Libraries will need to be available to those using services wherever they are
- Needs to be a more integrated way to present services

- So integrated they may not know they are even accessing our content
- We are so out there vs. not a gatekeeper
- Be able to get whatever, from wherever quickly
- Need more technology capability than we do today
- MIT Libraries offers collaborative spaces and places that support emerging needs
- Information commons/Lib/IT
- One-stop shopping for information/delivering whatever information they are looking for
- One search interface
 - Where it comes from doesn't matter
 - Need to align/integrate with other providers
- Need to be flexible

Individual Responses:

- Enough staff and resources to accomplish goals
- Reliable access to past/archived material
- Coherent/logical structure for interdisciplinary research
- The Libraries should deliver services where patrons want them, whether online or in physical spaces. More focus needs to be paid to gaps in services. What are we not delivering?
- Less books/more room for instruction rooms that double as study space or coffee/other areas
- That the MIT Libraries would be leaders in providing best possible access to electronic content; that we would continue to be a crucial resource to the MIT academic community
- Library space is comfortable and useful, e.g. wireless, electrical outlets
- More adaptable – staff, skills, services
- Less physical contact with users
- Software and hardware available and to be used
- Become a place where the community goes first
- MIT Libraries are nimble and responsive to the evolving priorities of the Institute – whether in the realm of teaching or research
- Being where our users are when they need us with the right solution and resources to help them
- Just-in-time full text articles available (from whatever source) through one search engine
- Well-capitalized

- The Libraries should become a technologically sophisticated, agile manager and publisher of information. IT infrastructure will increase in importance and physical spaces will decrease. Institutional partnerships will be crucial
- The Libraries are really present where users are and they think of us as being central to their research and academic work
- Our spaces support collaborative work – useful, fun
- To be as technologically savvy as an IT department
- The Libraries will fit more seamlessly into the education and researching activity of MIT
- The Libraries need to identify the technological factors that need to be enhanced and appropriately train staff to meet these challenges
- Step beyond common technology with reliable, thorough access to materials (MIT and worldwide)
- Be more of a virtual presence that is integrated into non-library virtual presences

Session Feedback:

- Bolder pens or lighter Post-It's
- Content is redundant
 - Vary questions, deeper issues
- Flow of A-B-C process > need to step through all
- Everyone should contribute to the “Desired Future State” vs. group