

**MIT Libraries**, Strategic Thinking with Library Council  
January 14, 2009

Brian MacDonald (MOR Associates) facilitated a three-hour strategic thinking session with Library Council. Notes from this session follow.

## **I. Introduction**, Ann Wolpert

- We are at the point where we can arrive at a set of shared priorities and goals.
- We need to articulate the desired future state and strategic goals for the Libraries, and then align our resources and talent behind this set of goals, as we have done in the past
- We are informed by conversations with the staff, preliminary survey results, and by changes taking place at MIT.
- MIT is not going to look the same 3 years from now. The Institute is in the process of rethinking how much education occurs on campus and internationally; at the same time, it is reconfiguring its financial platform.
- The Libraries will have less funds in the future, so we are in a position that demands we make good choices.

## **II. Context Matters: What's happening in regard to the faculty and students who use the Libraries?**

Steve shared very preliminary impressions from the recent library survey that went out to over 15,000 faculty, students, PostDocs, and other academic and research staff. The overall response was 49.5%. The Client Focus Group Survey Data Dissemination Team has begun working on a detailed analysis of the results, and will be sharing the survey data and comments with the library staff over the next few months. Some highlights:

- Overwhelming response for more electronic content/back-files – new subscriptions, databases, electronic books
- Making website easier – now too difficult to navigate – search tools not user-friendly
- Services: many comments on “I never knew you actually did this...”
- Many comments on the need to improve space
- High level of appreciation and satisfaction with services and staff
- In comparison with the 2005 survey:
  - Level of overall satisfaction with Libraries actually went up
  - Importance of Barton and Vera decreased

- Importance of Google Scholar increased

Diane also shared some data regarding the trend in the collections budget – in 2007, 43% of funds on information resources were spent on e-content; in 2008, 60% was spent on e-content, putting our resources where users are asking us to.

**III. Forces Shaping MIT Libraries** – Library Council members were asked to identify the high level implications associated with forces and trends (see associated document) that are likely to shape the future of the Libraries. Library Council members generated a list of implications that they later used for the discussion on what should the MIT Libraries aspire to be given these forces and trends. Council members were paired together to list the implications associated with a particular force. In a few cases a group was asked to look at two forces together, i.e., user trends/search and interdisciplinarity/pedagogy.

#### **a. User trends/Search**

**Users are becoming more digital, mobile, 7x24, international and disintermediated. Demand for digital increasing dramatically while demand for print is dropping in many areas.**

What are the implications?

- Reduce amount of metadata we produce ourselves by using externally generated metadata, e.g., services like Amazon
- Respond to the increase of other media in scholarly enterprise that are not easily indexed – need adequate discovery of non-text materials
- Search needs to expand beyond the scope of local holdings – Barton becomes a good inventory system and not a public search tool
- Shift focus from local discovery tools to search engine optimization
- Availability of full-text will reduce the need for metadata on books/journals/text
- Some faculty have a desire to be an active participant in creation of metadata – shift in how this is going to happen
- Better access to full-text to do discovery – provide all full-text directly
- Where to put the balance of effort?
- Physical collection location becomes less important
- Digital content management becomes more important

- Need for personal information management tools and services increases
- Ensure important collections are digitized
- Services are more digitized and virtual
- Space consolidation

**b. Content management- More demand to digitize print, video, etc. More demand to curate (e.g. preserve) and disseminate born-digital and digitized collections.**

What are the implications?

- Curation/preservation/life cycle management: we need to plan and build an infrastructure (technology, policies, management, operation)
- Must attend to discovery/delivery
- Whose role is this? This maps poorly to present organizational structure.
- Staffing – hire or develop new skills, training/new positions
- Budgeting – for a major new undertaking
  - Storage, backup, etc.
  - Digitization and metadata
  - Salaries
  - Development

**c. Content provisioning- Growing shift to digital books, journals, etc. and availability of related services, e.g., POD (print on demand) and custom teaching collections.**

What are the implications?

- More publishing options, including Open Access, disciplinary archives – can help to influence publishing environment by the choices we make
- Journal publishing – fewer publishers have influence on publishing and business practices
- Kinds of packaging promoted has bearing on how much content we can get/what we would like
- More digital/dual/print on-demand
- Publishers try and influence the market through the provision of bundled subject collections
- Relationships where users can borrow directly – determine best mix of direct and mediated services
- Google book settlement will have major impact

- Go into own collections and digitize own material to get to users in a more accessible format – so much of our content is physically stored

#### **d. Collaboration- Increased opportunity for external collaborations (e.g., other libraries, dotcoms, IS&T)**

What are the implications?

- Shared reference – institutions outside current mix, 24/7
- Specialized partnerships (e.g., data curation)
- Multi-media services – other partners on campus
- Collections
  - Shared repositories for storage
  - Is there a way to work with local partners and assign responsibilities in collections in this budget climate? Will it be more beneficial in the future, or less?
- Technology infrastructure – working with IS&T
- Cloud computing partnerships
- Research – R&D with others and strategic external partners
- Increased collaboration between -- Subject specialists – cataloguers/metadata librarians – scholars

#### **e. Scholarly communication- Increased availability of research data, enhanced publications, and Open Access. Increased need for datamining and knowledge management.**

What are the implications?

- Faculty want their work openly available
- "Ownership" by Libraries is diminishing (This may be transient. Will it revert back to libraries in the future?)
- Roles of different players in flux – authors, libraries, publishers, universities, scholarly societies
- Responsibilities are rebalancing – collections, creation, maintenance
- Librarians build the tools and maintain the systems that scholars put their content into
- Metadata is becoming a shared thing – scholars are providing for own content – now, who owns that? Is some shared? Is some kept by scholars because it is more interpretive?

#### **f. Inter-disciplinarity/Pedagogy**

**Trend toward more interdisciplinary research, the distinct lines between the disciplines are fading. Increased demand for**

### **technology to deliver teaching and course material (e.g., course management systems, rich media)**

What are the implications?

- Re-examine how we are currently organized around schools and DLC's.
- Improve collaboration among subject specialists
- Assess current collection funding model
- Strong need to be rich and diverse in subject knowledge
- Greater demand and need in librarian technical skills
- Need for involvement in teaching information literacy – interdisciplinary factor to the discovery of knowledge/expertise
- Move to project-based work at MIT
- Challenge to provide sustainable low-cost video support for teaching

### **g. Space- Growing user demand for technology-rich learning and multipurpose spaces.**

What are the implications?

- Need for group space with technology to support on a variety of forums
- Hours don't match user behaviors
- Collaboration w/other service units (e.g., writing center)
- Safety and security – for users and assets – remains challenge/key issue
- Technology shift – individual desktop, video conferencing, collaboration tools
- Staffing model that matches what's going on in the space at any given time
- Current space – enhanced to support the quiet, reflective user activity – enhanced "traditional" space
- Physical collection location – not necessarily less important but no longer aligns with the way people want to use collections in some cases. There are certain kinds of tangible materials that the community wants to find and use more easily – physical location may be more important in this sense – needs to be fundamentally re-thought

**IV. Desired Future State**, The Library Council members were asked to think about the desired future state for the MIT Libraries with the discussion on the forces shaping the future as background. Each subgroup was asked to sketch out the desired future state in an early draft form. There wasn't sufficient time for the group to develop a

synthesized version of the desired future state so a small working group (Diane and Steve) agreed to write the first draft.

### Subgroup A

Serving MIT 24/7, across the world by...

- Enabling seamless discovery and access to scholarly information sources – digital content is ubiquitous
- Providing consultation and training in finding, evaluating, and managing resources
- Offering quality spaces for both reflective and collaborative work and study, and engaging with resources and expertise
- Managing the life cycle of MIT's scholarly and research output  
Part of this mission is managing the life cycle of important MIT records

### Subgroup B

Work in partnership with the MIT community to identify and meet their needs (rather than what we think those needs are) and priorities in an increasingly digital landscape. Goal: collaborate in the teaching/learning/research life cycle.

### Subgroup C

The MIT Libraries will become more integrated with the research activities of the institute and central to the education experience; will focus its efforts on knowledge management and content curation, and especially MIT-created materials. The MIT Libraries will be an agile, data and mission- driven organization that collaborates effectively to achieve its goals.

### Subgroup D

-Metadata life cycle for all material that we manage or point to should be more efficient, less expensive, less redundant because it will still make it easier for our community to find – high quality.

-Have a user-service model that maximizes individual productivity of faculty, students and small groups.

-Spaces that support desired user model, consolidated and transformed to open when needed.

-To be highly functional and provide easy access to services no matter what the format.

- Libraries organized in a way to be flexible and agile in response to MIT's evolving needs.
- Solid collaboration with DUE, IS&T – enhance relationships.
- Rethink and expand our instruction role.

## **V. What Are Some Potential Strategic Goals You Will Need to Work on to Achieve the Desired Future State?**

Library Council members were tasked with generating potential strategic goals individually. The suggestions goals have been organized into affinity groups below.

### **Working in Partnership with Faculty, Students and the MIT Community**

- Our services are driven by what our users need
- Regular processes for gathering input on needs of MIT community
- Understand user needs and behaviors in knowledge management to define new services
- Broaden involvement with teaching faculty and research staff to deepen our engagement in their work
- Embed our services where our users work
- Have a user-service model that maximizes individual productivity of faculty, students and small groups.
- Do more with multimedia that would include introducing new technology and tools that students and faculty can use
- Higher subject level knowledge
- Development of relationships with scholars that integrates the Libraries into the teaching, learning, and research life cycle

### **Improve Infrastructure**

- Improve the technical infrastructure to support access to and use of our digital content
- Infrastructure to allow easy acquisition

### **Enhance Staff Capability**

- Identify the technical skills currently lacking amongst the staff in our organization – where do we need skills?/how do we get them?
- Recruitment and retention of staff with strong and diverse backgrounds

### **Work in Collaboration with Others**

- Collaboration with institutions, publishers, faculty and research labs, DUE and IS&T, dot coms, open courseware

### **Rethink-Reinvent the Organization**

- Reinvent our organization, encompassing operations, policy, technology
- Rethink organizational structure
- Organize the Libraries in a way to be flexible and agile in response to MIT's evolving needs.

### **Transform Library Spaces**

- Consolidate and transform physical spaces
- Transform library spaces to learning spaces with technology rich collaborative tools
- Consolidation of spaces and re-organization of the staff along functional lines
- Reallocate space and rethink organizational structure at the same time

### **Other**

- Improve marketing and communications of our services
- Raise money

## **VI. Key Strategic Choices**

An initial list of key strategic choices was generated. The list will be developed and synthesized to share with staff.

## **VII. Next Steps**

Steve and Diane will develop a draft of a strategic document that can be shared on a broader basis to get additional input.

Sessions will be scheduled for mid-February with all staff to provide an opportunity for additional discussion and input.

The strategic direction will be shared with stakeholders outside the Libraries to get their input.