

User Relations Manual for MIT Libraries Staff

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I Purpose of this Manual¹

Within the spaces managed by the MIT Libraries, we seek to create and maintain an environment that supports learning and research, and fosters a sense of community at MIT. In pursuit of these goals the Libraries try to ensure that:

- Library users and staff treat each other with respect and consideration.
- Library users and staff feel safe as they work and study.
- Library users conduct themselves with respect for each other's property and Institute property

In general our library users behave and act responsibly. Most users who act inappropriately will usually correct their behavior if gently encouraged by staff or colleagues.

This manual is intended to help staff in those rare circumstances when users are unwilling to conform to reasonable expectations for appropriate behavior.

See Appendix I for Institute policies regarding appropriate behavior at MIT.

¹ This document updates *Patron Relations: A Manual for the Staff of the MIT Libraries*, published in 1995.

II Guidelines for the Use of the MIT Libraries

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology is an independent, private university. Institute facilities, including the Libraries, have the primary purpose of supporting MIT's educational and research program. The Institute and the Libraries also seek to serve the community, the nation, and the world through the use of Institute facilities whenever there is a compelling need that can be met without impairing the Institute's primary function.

A. The Libraries seek to create and manage an environment that supports learning and research, and fosters a sense of community at MIT. In pursuit of these goals, the Libraries expect that:

- Library users and staff treat each other with respect and consideration.
- Library users and staff respect private and Institute property.
- Library users and staff feel safe as they work and study.
- Library users comply with requests made by library staff.
- Library users act in a manner consistent with these guidelines and other library policies.

B. Library users are expected to refrain from:

- Behaviors that threaten personal safety, personal property, or Institute property.
- Behaviors that disrupt the activities of other library users or staff, including:
 - Excessive noise from socializing, cell phone activity, music, or other inappropriate activities.
 - Hostile, rude, and other inappropriate forms of public behavior (including consumption of food and drink).
 - Excessive or inappropriate use of resources such as books, journals, seating space, study rooms or computers. Inappropriate use of computing resources includes:
 - Tampering with equipment.
 - Excessive recreational use (e.g., games).
 - Viewing websites or images that violate institute guidelines on harassment (see <http://web.mit.edu/policies/9.5.html>).

C. Visitors to MIT are normally permitted to use the Libraries' facilities and resources on the condition that they comply with these guidelines and conduct their work in a manner consistent with MIT policy. Unaffiliated visitors and guests must defer to priority users when a conflict arises in the use of resources or services. **Priority users are:**

- Members of the MIT Community.
- Invited guests and affiliated users.

Additional visitor information is available at <http://libraries.mit.edu/groups/visitors/index.html>.

D. Access Limits: The MIT Libraries may, at their discretion, limit or refuse access by individuals or groups whose behavior fails to comply with these guidelines.

III Dangerous and Criminal Behavior

A. Definitions and examples

The behaviors listed below threaten public safety, personal property, or Institute property. They require an immediate response. Specific behaviors include:

- Intoxicated behavior
- Theft of library materials
- Theft of personal items
- Threatening behavior
- Trespassing
- Vandalism or graffiti
- Verbal or physical altercations between users

See Appendix III for detailed descriptions and notes on these behaviors.

B. Guidelines for response

If you observe a crime in progress, a crime is reported to you, or you suspect there is potential danger in a developing situation, call Campus Police at Extension 100.² Do not compromise your personal safety by approaching someone who is engaged in dangerous or criminal behavior. Use the panic button underneath the desk if so equipped and you have no other options.

When calling Campus Police:

1. Tell them your name and exactly where you are calling from, including the name of the library, building and room number.
2. Clearly and concisely describe the incident or situation and request assistance.
3. When the police arrive, the staff member who called should be prepared to direct them to the situation and answer any questions they may have.

Note: If you feel threatened with bodily harm, hit the panic button if you are at a desk equipped with one. Call Campus Police as soon as possible to follow up, although assistance should be on its way immediately after you have hit the panic button.

In addition to calling Campus Police:

- If your supervisor or other library staff are available, call them for assistance.
- Identify possible witnesses to actions.
- Document with an incident report (see p. 8 for instructions and Appendix IV for examples).

² Always call x100 in an emergency. If a campus phone is unavailable or extension 100 is out of order, use 617.253.1212. Only use 911 as a last resort since these calls are routed to MIT Police from a state dispatch bureau and will have a slower response time. Read more about campus safety and crime prevention at the Campus Police website: <http://web.mit.edu/cp/www/hbook.shtml>.

IV Disruptive Behavior

A. Definitions and examples

Disruptive behaviors are actions that may interfere with the legitimate activities of other library users or staff. Library staff members need to exercise their best judgment before taking action. Depending on the situation and your level of comfort, you might choose to intervene directly, contact your supervisor, or call Campus Police. Local units are encouraged to document possible chronic behavior problems. More serious transgressions warrant an incident report.

Examples of disruptive behaviors:

- Demonstrations / pranks
- Eating / drinking
- Hoarding
- Inappropriate computing
- Lonely / possessive / helpless behavior
- Panhandling / soliciting / petitioning
- Sleeping
- Talking / socializing

See Appendix III for detailed descriptions and notes on these behaviors.

B. Guidelines for response

If it feels safe to do so take appropriate steps to inform offenders about library policies and ask them to correct their behavior. If the behavior persists, is sufficiently disruptive to require an immediate response, and the offenders are deemed unapproachable, call Campus Police at Extension 100. Use the panic button underneath the desk if so equipped and you have no other options.

When calling Campus Police:

1. Tell them your name and exactly where you are calling from, including the name of the library and the building and room number.
2. Clearly and concisely describe the incident or situations and request assistance.
3. When the police arrive, the staff member who called should be prepared to direct them to the situation and answer any questions they may have.

In addition to calling Campus Police:

- If your supervisor or other library staff are available, call them for assistance.
- Identify possible witnesses to actions.
- Document with an incident report (see p. 8 for instructions and Appendix IV for examples).

V Abusive User-Staff Interactions

A. Definitions and examples

The Libraries do not condone abusive behavior toward library staff. While abusive behavior does not have to be tolerated by any staff member, staff should never insult or abuse users who are abusive themselves. Depending on the situation you might choose to contact your supervisor or call Campus Police. Local units should develop reasonable procedures to document potential chronic problems. More serious transgressions warrant an incident report. Examples are:

- Irate / abusive behavior
- Telephone / email harassment

See Appendix III for detailed descriptions and notes on these behaviors.

B. Guidelines for response

Users should always leave the library feeling that their reasonable requests and/or complaints were taken into consideration and handled properly. The following steps are offered as a guide for dealing with difficult user/staff interactions:

1. Remain calm, receptive, and nonjudgmental.
2. Listen carefully to the user's question, request, or complaint.
3. Pause, breathe deeply, and think before responding.
4. Speak in a relaxed, low tone. Repeat and paraphrase what the user has said as concisely as possible.
5. Be pleasantly calm and firm. Do not argue. Stick to the issue and do not get sidetracked by peripheral arguments.
6. Resolve the problem, if you have the authority to do so.
7. If an exception cannot justifiably be made, explain the policy and give a succinct explanation of its rationale. Share a written copy of the policy with the user if possible.
8. Offer alternatives that do not violate policy.
9. Refer the user to your supervisor or ask another staff member to corroborate your explanation. If your supervisor is not available, give the user the supervisor's name and MIT phone number and the hours when s/he can be reached.
10. Encourage the user to make a complaint in writing, via email, or by telephone, if you can't satisfactorily resolve the user's issue. Give him or her the name and contact information of the relevant person. Make your supervisor aware of the incident.
11. If the user's behavior becomes disruptive, call your supervisor, department head, the Associate Director for Public Services, and/or the Campus Police for assistance as appropriate, or, if necessary, follow the guidelines for response under Disruptive Behavior, p. 5.
12. If at any time you feel physically threatened during your interaction with an irate user, call Campus Police at Extension 100. Use the panic button underneath the desk if so equipped and you have no other options.

VI. Medical Emergencies

A. Definitions and examples

Medical emergencies³ require immediate response. Examples of medical emergencies are:

- Chest pain
- Unconsciousness
- Uncontrollable bleeding

Non-emergency medical problems may include minor injuries or evidence of illness, e.g., vomiting. In such cases the user may not be in immediate danger, but he or she may need transportation or escort assistance to reach a medical provider. Members of the MIT community suffering from these types of non-emergency medical problems can be referred to MIT's Urgent Care service, <http://web.mit.edu/medical/services/s-urgent.html>.

B. Guidelines for response

If you believe the situation is a medical emergency, call Campus Police at Extension 100.

When calling Campus Police:

1. Tell them your name and exactly where you are calling from, including the name of the library and the building and room number.
2. Clearly and concisely describe the incident or situation and request assistance.
3. When the police arrive, the staff member who called should be prepared to direct them to the situation and answer any questions they may have.

In addition to calling Calling Police:

- If reasonable and possible, provide immediate assistance to the person. After the situation has been resolved, document with an incident report (see p. 8 for instructions and Appendix IV for examples).

Note: If you are unsure whether a situation qualifies as a medical emergency, call Campus Police and ask for advice or assistance.

³ MIT employs "The Prudent Layperson Standard" in determining medical emergencies that require emergency room care. This refers to any medical, maternity, or psychiatric emergency that leads a prudent layperson to believe that a serious medical condition exists, or that the absence of medical attention will result in a threat to a person's life, limb, or sight. In other words, the person believes his or her health or life is in danger, and emergency medical intervention is needed. See <http://web.mit.edu/medical/services/s-emergency.html> for additional information.

VI Reporting and follow-up procedures

A. Incident Reports (see Appendix IV for examples)

1. File an incident report via email for any of the following situations:
 - The event involves a call to Campus Police.
 - Potential exists for a formal complaint or communication from a user.
 - The problem is ongoing or chronic problem.
2. Who should create the report?
 - If the supervisor is on duty, he/she is responsible for seeing to it that a report is made.
 - In the absence of a supervisor, which is commonplace on evenings and weekends, the lead staff person on duty should ensure that a report is made – either by her-himself or by the staff member most directly involved.
3. To whom should the report be sent?
 - All reports should be directed to the department head, supervisor, and others as determined by unit practice.
 - Reports of incidents where the Campus Police are summoned should also be directed to the Associate Director for Public Services.
 - Other serious incidents should also be reported to the Associate Director for Public Services, with appropriate judgment exercised by the reporting individual.
4. What information should be included in the report?

A report should be sent via email and include:

- Date & time
- Location
- Library staff involved
- Description of the incident
- Names/contact information for users, police, witnesses

B. Follow-up Communication

- Sharing information across units:
Department heads and the Associate Director for Public Services are responsible for sharing information across units.
- Sharing incident reports with Police and other MIT Departments:
Department heads and the Associate Director for Public Services will be responsible for referring incident reports to external units or Campus Police. Problems involving MIT students or staff will be communicated to the responsible unit by the supervisor, department head or the Associate Director as appropriate.
- Campus Police action follow-up communication:
The Associate Director for Public Services is responsible for ensuring that Campus Police and external units report back to the Libraries. The Associate Director may delegate the communication path as he/she deems fit.
- Affiliated Users:
If an affiliated user (e.g., BLC, Harvard, P-Card) is banned from the MIT Libraries, the action will be communicated to the user by the supervisor, Department Head, or the Associate Director as appropriate.

Appendix I Institute Policies

A. MIT Community

Faculty and Staff: Institute policies governing all aspects of conduct for faculty and staff at MIT are found at: <http://web.mit.edu/policies/>. Most specific behaviors described in this document fall within the scope of:

Relations and Responsibilities Within the MIT Community (Section 9.1):
All members of the MIT community are expected to conduct themselves with proper respect for one another and for each other's property. The Institute fosters the attitude that every person brings unique qualities, talents, and dignity to the community and that every individual deserves to be treated, judged, and accorded both common decencies and all the benefits of society in an evenhanded and respectful manner.

Some actions could fall under the policy manual's section on **Academic Misconduct and Dishonesty (10.0)**.

Students: Institute policies governing conduct for students at MIT are found at: <http://web.mit.edu/acadinfo/>. Students are also covered under the appropriate sections of Institute policy described in the previous section. MIT's Office of Student Discipline, <http://web.mit.edu/discipline/>, handles complaints against students.

B. Outside Users

Expectations and Privileges

The MIT Libraries' primary purpose is to support MIT's teaching, research, and scholarly activities; see <http://libraries.mit.edu/about/mission.html>. Access to some resources and services is reserved for the MIT community only.

- Outside users must defer to priority users in the use of resources and services.
- Refer to the **Library Services to Outside Users** page for additional information, <http://libraries.mit.edu/groups/visitors/index.html>.

Priority Users

- Members of the MIT community
- Invited guests and affiliated users

Access Limits: The MIT Libraries may, at their discretion, limit or refuse access by individuals or groups whose behavior fails to comply with the guidelines listed on p. 3.

Appendix II FAQ re Campus Police, Trespassing, and the Federal Depository Program

When should Campus Police be called?

- Any time that personal or property safety issues arise.
- If library staff or users notice suspicious individuals.
- If individuals are violating acceptable library behavior standards and library staff need assistance with the transgressors.

How will Campus Police follow-up when they take action on a library incident?

Campus Police are prohibited from sharing copies of arrest reports. They can provide the library with names and descriptions of individuals who have been trespassing. They can report actions taken after an individual has been removed from the library. Such communication is best conducted via the Associate Director for Public Services.

Trespassing, what is it?

Police, at their discretion, generate a legal notice (“trespass a person”). Once this notice is generated, individuals are subject to arrest if they return to campus. A threshold of transgression must be crossed before the police will take this action. For a person to be trespassed for disruptive behavior, the library must have publicly posted policies about acceptable behavior.

What if there is a conflict of expectation between library staff and Campus Police about how to deal with a specific incident?

Proactive communication will help to minimize the risks of this happening. Campus Police have reviewed and approved this document.

911 vs. Extension 100?

Always call Extension 100 in an emergency. If a campus phone is unavailable or extension 100 is out of order, use 617.253.1212. Only use 911 as a last resort because these calls are routed to MIT Police from a state dispatch bureau and will have a slower response time. Read more about campus safety and crime prevention at the Campus Police website: <http://web.mit.edu/cp/www/hbook.shtml>

Does the Libraries’ status as a Federal Documents Depository preserve access for individuals who have been otherwise banned from campus?

Those rights are overridden if an individual’s behavior results in loss of access to the Libraries.

Appendix III Unacceptable Behavior – Additional Information

- **Demonstrations / pranks**

So long as demonstrations and briefly disruptive pranks (such as Tarzan yells and sprints down the hallways) do not occasion more than a momentary distraction to library users, do not interfere with library operations, and do not jeopardize the safety of persons or library property, they should be tolerated with good humor. However, longer, repeated, and/or more organized disturbances should not be tolerated.

- **Eating / drinking**

Eating and drinking in a library environment can cause deterioration of materials, equipment and furniture; dirty/sticky work surfaces and surroundings; loss of concentration for users who are distracted by noise and odors; or insect and rodent problems. Follow local unit policies.

- **Hoarding**

It is often appropriate to leave a gathered collection of library materials for several hours or overnight, but it is not acceptable for users to hold these materials for extended periods or to hide them in other parts of the library. Lack of borrowing privileges does not confer any additional rights to gather and store materials. It is also inappropriate to claim areas of the library as personal space by leaving personal property in place for extended periods of time.

- **Inappropriate computing**

Library computers are provided to support teaching and research at the Institute. Inappropriate use of the public computers includes: tampering with the computers in a way that interferes with the ability of other users to use them; monopolizing the computers for personal recreational activity (e.g. games); public viewing of websites and images that would violate Institute guidelines on harassment. Unaffiliated users may not monopolize public stations for personal use that is not consistent with the Libraries' function, and they must defer to priority users when a conflict arises over computers.

- **Intoxicated behavior**

It is often difficult to ascertain whether persons who exhibit aberrant behavior are under the influence of alcohol or drugs or are suffering from some other type of condition. All such persons may exhibit abrupt and extreme changes of mood and should be approached with caution.

- **Irate / abusive Users**

While this behavior does not have to be tolerated by any staff member, do not insult or abuse users who are themselves abusive.

- **Lonely / possessive/ helpless behavior:**

Persons exhibiting such behavior may wish to monopolize the time of library staff and other library users. They may engage in excessively long conversations and resent efforts to encourage them to come to the point or to terminate discussion. Although these individuals are usually friendly, they can also be abrupt, rude, and impatient in their demeanor and extraordinarily persistent in their requests for assistance and services. They may appear quite helpless. They may be quick to take personal offense at negative answers. They may not accept explanations of necessary limits to service. When assisting a person who wishes to monopolize your attention, set a limit on the amount of time you can allow. Give clear step-by-step answers to his/her questions in writing, if possible, and encourage the person to be self-sufficient. Do not set a precedent of doing everything for the person. While it is possible in some cases that this type of behavior may be caused by learning disabilities, it is still appropriate to set limits.

- **Panhandling / soliciting / petitioning**

These activities are disruptive to library users and are in conflict with the MIT Libraries' desire to maintain an environment that supports teaching and research.

- **Sleeping**

Habitual sleepers, noisy sleepers and those who are sprawled on furniture or the floor may be disturbing other users. In addition, sleepers leave themselves vulnerable to property theft. Users who simply doze off for a short time should ordinarily be left alone. **Please note:** To wake a sleeper approach from the front, remaining at arm's length. Do *not* touch the person. Rap the table or the wall to awaken the person and speak quietly. Identify yourself as a staff member.

- **Talking / socializing**

Excessive noise is disturbing to other users and library staff. Be alert to overbearing, noisy talkers. Other users may be too intimidated to complain and are often reluctant to move elsewhere because library study space is not always easy to find.

- **Telephone / email harassment**

If you receive a harassing or obscene phone call, hang up immediately. If the calls persist, call Campus Police. If you receive harassing or obscene email, forward copies to stopit@mit.edu (see <http://web.mit.edu/stopit/> for more information) and your supervisor. If you have questions about the harassment threshold, consult with your supervisor.

- **Theft of library materials**

If you observe or suspect the theft of library materials and are unable to stop the user from removing the materials, report the incident to Campus Police and file an incident report.

- **Theft of personal items**

If a theft is reported, contact Campus Police and file an incident report.

- **Threatening behavior**

Behavior by individuals that makes staff or other users feel unsafe could represent a threat to the safety of library staff and users. It may also represent a safety risk to the person exhibiting the behavior. Examples include direct or indirect threats of harm (such as words or gestures that intimidate others), prolonged or frequent shouting, and stalking or following a user or staff member. See <http://web.mit.edu/discipline/whatyoushouldknow.html> for additional information.

- **Trespassing**

Campus Police generate a legal notice for non-MIT individuals who engage in unacceptable behaviors on campus. Once they have received this notification they are subject to arrest if they re-appear anywhere on campus. People whom police have removed from libraries for unacceptable behavior may receive a trespass notice as a result of those incidents at the discretion of Campus Police.

- **Vandalism or graffiti**

If you witness the destruction or defacement of personal or Institute property, or if this activity is reported to you while in progress, call the Campus Police immediately. If you discover this type of activity after the fact, report it to your supervisor and, depending on its severity, to Campus Police.

- **Verbal or physical altercations between users**

Campus Police should be contacted for immediate assistance when physical altercations occur. If you are unable to reasonably mediate verbal altercations, or fear for your own personal safety in doing so, call the Campus Police for assistance. *Do not compromise your personal safety by approaching someone who is engaged in dangerous or criminal behavior.*

Appendix IV: Sample Incident Reports

A. Medical Emergency

Date & Time: October 10, 2003, 8 pm

Location: Hayden

Library Staff Involved: Barton Rogers

Description of the incident:

On Friday night there was a user who got sick up in the periodicals area. The only reason we know this is because another person reported it. I asked him if he was ok and he said he was. Later, he came back down to the 24 hour room and began getting sick in a garbage can. I called campus police and they asked him to leave. They told me they have dealt with him before. The name they gave me was Jack Rabbit. He is not listed in MIT's web directory.

Recently, I have received complaints from both the cleaning crew and from systems people who work on the computers in the 24x7 room because he is extremely messy.

Names/Contact Information for Users, Police, Witnesses:

Officer Daly, MIT Police

B. Theft

Date & Time: August 15, 2003, 3:15 pm

Location: Barker

Library Staff Involved: Vera River

Description of the incident:

A user came to the desk to report a stolen laptop. She had briefly stepped away from her table to answer a cell phone call, and the laptop was missing on her return.

Police were called, and they took a report. There were no witnesses to the theft.

Names/Contact Information for Users, Police, Witnesses:

Janet Dell, 3rd yr, EECS (laptop owner)

Officer Daly, MIT Police

C. Unruly User

Date & Time: January 5, 2004, 9:25 pm

Location: Dewey

Library Staff Involved: SFX Owens

Description of the incident:

This evening a user got into an argument with our student at the circulation desk. It began with a dispute over a fine for an overdue reserve item. The user, Professor Dow Jones, became angry and began shouting at the student. I came over to assist the student, but was unable to calm the user down.

In addition to the dispute over reserves, the professor was very upset with our hours over the Winter break. When I suggested that he contact our head and the library director, he began shouting obscenities, threw the reserve book at me, and walked out of the library.

Names/Contact Information for Users, Police, Witnesses:

Dan Bradstreet, student worker

D. Disruptive Behavior

Date & Time: 11/25/2003 1:50:44 PM

Location: Rotch

Library Staff Involved: Mary Curie, Circ Supervisor

Description of the incident:

A user came to the desk to complain about a group of messy, noisy students on the 4th floor. A staff member went up to check and found three students talking loudly, with full meals spread out. They were asked to be more respectful of their neighbors, and to clean up the mess they had created. I checked back about 15 minutes later - they were quieter, but had done nothing to clean up the mess they had created. I repeated our request, at which point they packed up and left. We didn't get their names, but we think that they're engineering students.

Names/Contact Information for Users, Police, Witnesses:

Jack Grammy, Circ Asst.