MIT Libraries: Achieving a Desired Future State for 2015

I. Introduction

As the MIT Libraries approach the end of the current strategic plan (FY2005 - FY2010), we are focused on what we need to be in the future to assure our continued success in support of research and teaching at MIT. All North American research libraries face extraordinary challenges, driven by internal dynamics, institutional priorities, and fast-moving external forces. These various forces and their implications, some of the most significant of which are listed below, are catalysts for change within the Libraries. They must be acknowledged and addressed appropriately if we are to continue to succeed in our mission.

A force of a different nature, which will also impact how we respond to these trends, is the volatility of the General Institute Budget. As a core academic resource, the Libraries will need to closely follow the priorities set by the Institute itself in the coming years, as over 90% of MIT Libraries' funding is provided by the GIB. Focused collections and excellent, innovative services will continue to be the gold standard by which we judge the effectiveness of our mission and our contributions to the Institute.

II. Forces Acting as Catalysts for Change

The MIT Libraries have never been a traditional research library. The Libraries have long benefited from the experimental and entrepreneurial culture of MIT, and they are known for their innovation and for a willingness to take calculated risks. In comparison with many of their peers, the MIT Libraries are more client focused, more comfortable with technology, and more flexible than many others are able to be.

Critical external uncertainties abound in the international, interdisciplinary, inter-institutional environment in which MIT operates. The downstream impact of MIT’s response to various opportunities will, of course, affect the MIT Libraries over time. In the near term, we can see emerging trends that require more immediate attention. At least nine significant forces continue to or will soon require considered action by the Libraries.

User demands and expectations

Users want and expect content to be digital, easy to discover, accessible 24x7 from anywhere in the world without mediation, and usable with new and emerging technologies, e.g., mobile devices.

Search and discovery

Services such as Google, Amazon, YouTube, Flickr, and WorldCat Local are
redefining traditional roles for discovery and metadata provision, and users are
gravitating quickly to these systems to search full-text content, images, and video
as well as for recommendations from other users.

Content management
The increasing demand to digitize print, video, and other analog content and to
capture content already in digital form, including research data, is challenging
libraries to develop new strategies for organizing, curating and preserving the
scholarly record for both born-digital and digitized collections.

Content delivery
The growing shift to digital books and e-journals; increase in production and
sharing of research data; and prevalence of multi-media content and related
services, e.g., Print on Demand (POD), custom teaching collections, and rich media
production services; requires us to rethink traditional strategies for delivering new
and dynamic content.

Collaboration
There is increasing opportunity and necessity for broader collaborations with
other service and content providers including units at MIT, other libraries,
publishers, commercial entities, and open source communities to leverage limited
resources and share specialized expertise.

Scholarly communication
Scholarly publishing is in transition; new models of open access publishing coupled
with mandates for authors and universities to retain the rights to their own works
are increasing. Effective use of technology, e.g. data mining, coupled with new
models of publishing, have the potential to transform communication of research
at reduced cost to universities, more flexible reuse, and the ability to provide
access to enhanced publications that include the underlying data collections and
models.

Interdisciplinarity
The continued trend towards interdisciplinary research demands that we re-examine
our current approach to disciplinary support in building and organizing physical
and virtual collections and providing research support services at the point of
need.

Pedagogy
There is increasing demand for using technology to deliver teaching and course
material (e.g., course management systems, interactive teaching materials, and rich
media), as well as, for collaborating with faculty to ensure that MIT students
graduate with essential lifelong learning skills – the ability to find, evaluate,
manage, and use a wide variety of information resources effectively.
Space
There is growing user demand for technology-rich learning and multi-purpose spaces that are functional, comfortable, and aesthetically pleasing; and an imperative to optimally configure collections, services, and staff to meet changing user needs.

III. Mission and Vision of the MIT Libraries

Mission
The mission of the MIT libraries is to create and sustain an intuitive, trusted information environment that enables learning and the advancement of knowledge at MIT. We are committed to developing innovative services, strategies, and systems that promote discovery, preserve knowledge, and improve worldwide scholarly communication. We empower MIT through knowledge. (Adopted 2003, revised February 2009)

Vision
Guided by a user-centered approach to service, the Libraries will be an agile, creative, and data-driven organization that:

Enables seamless discovery and access to scholarly information sources.
Manages knowledge, with an emphasis on MIT-created content.
Provides faculty, students, and staff with expert support and training to find, evaluate, manage, and use resources.
Creates high-quality spaces for both reflective and collaborative work and study.
Leads initiatives to inform and shape the future of libraries and scholarly research.

IV. Key Strategic Directions to Achieve the Desired Future State

Create the Next Generation Research Library Organization
In order to be flexible and agile in response to evolving needs of the MIT community, we must re-align our organization and staff to better manage our content, and design and deliver information services that are based on the needs of a broadly networked interdisciplinary, international, and virtual community rather than on the legacy of a 50-year old geographical footprint. We must use sound assessment practices to make strategic choices about where to place our resources in service to the community.

Build and Strengthen Relationships with Faculty, Students, and the MIT Community
Continue to seek community input and build strategic alliances with
constituencies we serve to remain relevant and define new services that meet user needs. Our success depends on both broadening and deepening our engagement with faculty, students, and research staff; developing relationships that appropriately integrate Library services and collections into the teaching, learning, and research life cycle; embedding services where our users work; maximizing their productivity; and effectively promoting and communicating our services.

**Advocate for Sound Information Policy**
Expand and enhance our advocacy for developing and promoting sensible information policies for copyright and intellectual property, and technical policies for identity management. Seek to effect licensing principles and public policy consistent with these policies. Collaborate with faculty on new initiatives for author’s rights and scholarly communication.

**Improve Infrastructure for Digital Content Management and Delivery**
MIT’s intellectual output is increasingly produced in digital form; similarly, we increasingly manage digital content that we acquire, license, or digitize. It is essential that we identify, build, and maintain infrastructures to ensure that we acquire, store, preserve, manage, and provide access to these resources for the long term and in the most efficient way possible.

**Transform Library Space**
Key aspects of 21st Century Libraries’ space for MIT include: providing quality spaces for both reflective and collaborative work; providing technology-rich collaborative tools and the expertise and specialist services to support them; and rethinking the role and location of tangible collections to support these realigned spaces and services. Better integrate discovery of and access to both online and physical information assets to improve the coherence of our multifarious but deep, rich collections.

**Collaborate with Strategic Partners Outside the Libraries**
Expand and extend strategic partnerships with DUE, IS&T, Harvard, MIT research labs, OCW, publishers, commercial companies, and open source communities. Enlist new partners in order to leverage expertise, maximize resources, and provide infrastructural support and specialized services to our community.

**Enhance Staff Capabilities**
Align and develop staff skills with our strategic directions to ensure success. Continue to recruit talented staff with strong and diverse backgrounds. Create mechanisms to insure necessary professional development in a dynamic environment.