

Director, MIT Libraries

Throughout academic year 2023, the MIT Libraries continued to be guided by the [MIT Libraries' Vision](#), a set of principles that inform our operational decisions and activities. Reframed as our “Enduring Vision,” the principles that guided our strategy in the face of the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic have been updated to guide our work in the post-Covid era and beyond. We made great progress this year toward our goal of facilitating, supporting, and recognizing the open sharing of MIT research with the world. Notable accomplishments in this area included a change to MIT’s thesis copyright policy giving MIT students control over their own intellectual property, establishing an open monograph fund to further MIT authors’ ability to publish open access, and presenting the inaugural MIT Prize for Open Data—awarded to 10 individual and group projects by MIT researchers that created, used, or advanced the dissemination of open data.

The Libraries continue to be challenged by a staff stretched thin. While there are many compelling new opportunities for partnership and advocacy across the Institute and beyond, there remains a continued need for “legacy” services for our community. Our first “Inconference,” an internal conference that gathered all staff together on campus for the first time in three years, was a key step toward engaging library staff with our vision for the future.

In the coming year, we will develop a plan to address the challenges and promises of generative artificial intelligence (AI), focusing on its impact on the trustworthiness and integrity of research. We also have plans for contributing to campus conversations about climate change and freedom of expression through carefully curated events and speakers.

Highlights of the MIT Libraries’ work and accomplishments over the past year are provided below, organized by the principles of our Enduring Vision.

A Digital-First Library

In order to maximize digital access to content and services, the Libraries focused on the following projects and services.

- We provided 75% of reference sessions, in which library staff recommend, interpret, or evaluate resources to help users online to meet specific information needs.
- In terms of scanning distinctive collections, this year we scanned 106,000 pages, continuing a more than 110% increase over pre-pandemic volume. Our on-demand scanning requests increased by nearly 40% and, despite the added volume, we have measurably improved our turnaround time for both on-demand manuscript scanning—achieving a nine-day reduction over fiscal year 2022—and thesis scanning—a 14-day reduction. Our web archives collections have grown by 25%, and our digital collections have grown by 50% in the last two years.
- The Libraries dedicated 96% of the collections spend to digital resources and 82% of the book spend to electronic books. Pre-pandemic, the electronic book spend was only 60% of the book budget. During the pandemic, purchases of print

materials slowed dramatically, and since then we have ensured that select print items published during those years are made available to users. Our spend on print materials in FY2023 was robust in support of this recovery and we expect to spend less going forward.

- We started a pilot project with Rialto, a service to improve the efficiency of book acquisitions by moving workflows from print-based to digital.
- A strategic plan was developed to determine the future direction of the Libraries' discovery ecosystem—an interconnected system of tools, platforms, interfaces, and data that support library users in engaging our collections and services. This work was led by the Discovery Steering Committee, an inter-directorate group charged in 2022 by the senior leadership team.
- We continued to refine processes related to the migration to the Alma Library Management System, including workflows, documentation, enhancements, integrations, and libraries-wide governance to ensure the platform meets evolving goals and expectations.

Open and Equitable Scholarship

To accelerate the progress of science, promote equity and inclusion across disciplines, and reduce the marginalization of scholars and scholarship from disadvantaged communities, the Libraries engaged in the following activities.

- In partnership with the School of Science, we presented the inaugural MIT Prize for Open Data to highlight the value of open data at MIT and encourage the next generation of researchers. Ten winners and 16 honorable mentions were selected from more than 70 nominees representing all five schools and several research centers. The award included a \$2,500 cash prize and an opportunity for the winners to present their research at an event during Open Access Week in October.
- We continued to grow our investments in developing and encouraging the creation of open access collections: FY2023 saw a 64% increase in spending over FY2022, which was a 30% increase over FY2021. Our investment in supporting open access has grown 849% since FY2018.
- The Open Monograph Fund was created, further facilitating MIT authors' ability to publish open access. With support from the provost, we funded 31 monographs for \$256,000, covering 95% of the fees authors were required to pay.
- We continued to negotiate under the [MIT Framework for Publisher Contracts](#) and signed new framework-aligned agreements with two publishers: the Association for Computing Machinery and American Institute of Physics Publishing. We also made progress on a one-year contract with the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers. Since the framework debuted in fall 2019, the Libraries' negotiations team has introduced it to 15 publishers and signed framework-aligned agreements with 12 of them. Counting renewal agreements, we have signed 20 framework-aligned agreements. This will result in 2,400 open articles published via our framework contracts, including 581 articles in 2023 and another 683 projected for 2024 under current agreements.

- Although a second Read and Publish proposal from Elsevier was entertained, it was rejected with the support of the Committee for the Library System, the provost, and the president. We continued to meet community needs for new Elsevier content through a vended service for rapid document delivery. We filled nearly 7,000 requests, and 92% of articles were delivered within one minute.
- Sixty percent of MIT faculty research articles were openly made available in the Open Access Collection in the DSpace@MIT repository.
- A vote was shepherded through the MIT Faculty to revise [Rules and Regulations of the Faculty 2.73](#) to enable graduate students to retain copyright of their theses. The former policy resulted in most students relinquishing their copyright to the Institute, which was out of alignment with principles from the MIT Framework for Publisher Contracts stating “scholars and scholarly communities should retain control over their own intellectual output.” Updated policy language was passed at the February faculty meeting (53 in favor, two opposed). MIT [Policy and Procedures 13.1](#) on Intellectual Property was also amended to correspond and was passed by the Academic Council.
- The Libraries conducted evidence-based research through the Center for Research on Equitable and Open Scholarship.
 - The inaugural cohort of postdoctoral scholars, supported by a grant from the Mellon Foundation, concluded their two-year appointments. Ashley Thomas explored the role of local department or lab culture on individual attitudes towards open scholarship; she joined the faculty of Harvard University. Suman Maity illuminated the extent and impact of gender-based citation biases; he has taken a position at Missouri University. Corey Masao Johnson interrogated the complexities of endangered language preservation and how languages are both preserved and appropriately protected in physical and data repositories; he will begin a fellowship with the American Council with Learned Studies.
 - The research project Community Tracking Indicators for Open and Inclusive Scholarship, funded by the Institute for Museum and Library Services, presented its early findings. This project produces standardized indicators of who participates in open science and scholarly communications over time.

Data-Intensive and Computational Research

The Libraries supported data-intensive and computational research and learning across the Institute.

- Our partnership with the new Office of Research Computing and Data (ORCD) was strengthened. Together with ORCD, the Libraries will help navigate the policy landscape imposed by federal funders, make MIT's open data findable and reusable, and help researchers develop data management plans that define how they and MIT will make federally supported research accessible to the public.

- We developed the MIT Libraries Vision and Mission for Data Services to guide and inform our approach to hiring, service expansion, and collaboration across MIT. Data Services, comprising Geographic Information Systems (GIS), Data Management Services, and Statistical Services, provided critical expertise across MIT. The team worked with 68 different departments, labs, and centers, answered 621 queries from the community, and drew 726 attendees at workshops. There were more than 2,400 computer logins in the GIS and Data Lab.
- We launched our public-facing collections index and application programming interface (API), TIMDEX—a free discovery API into collections at MIT Libraries—as a GraphQL endpoint with improved documentation and maintainability. TIMDEX is updated daily with the Libraries’ primary collections metadata, as well as collections records from DSpace@MIT and the historic archives, setting us up to continue indexing additional data sources in FY2024.
- In addition, we worked with the Harvard Dataverse team, under new leadership, to update and expand our use of Dataverse—a free data repository for storage of licensed and purchased datasets.
- The Libraries successfully demonstrated a technical proof-of-concept for an MIT Research Data Index; the project team prescribes future work on policy and metadata.

Essential Core: Physical Collections, Services, and Spaces

Physical resources are critical to MIT research, teaching, and community building.

- Visits to Hayden Library increased 23% from AY2022. The Building 14 Courtyard—revitalized as part of the Hayden Library renovation—received a merit award in general design from the Boston Society of Landscape Architects.
- The Libraries continued to present a vibrant program of community engagement activities, hosting 78 events in the Nexus—Hayden Library’s event space—and 23 in the renovated Building 14 Courtyard, drawing a total of 3,440 people. The number of events and the audience reached more than doubled from the previous year.
- Maihaugen Gallery hours were expanded to make exhibits accessible to the MIT community 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and to the general public during campus open hours.
- We welcomed researchers to Distinctive Collections, although at a lower rate than pre-pandemic as many researchers worldwide have come to appreciate the digitization services the Libraries are now offering. Class visit numbers are recovering, with 45 classes taught, up from 33 last year.
- We developed a workflow to regularly announce newly acquired materials in Distinctive Collections. Acquisitions in 2023 included the Gyorgy Kepes Arts and the Environment and Vision and Value collection; Experimental Music Studio recordings; additions to President L. Rafael Reif’s papers; records from the Art, Culture and Technology Program, MIT’s Wright Brothers Wind Tunnel; and a gift of several folios by Ben Jonson from 1640–1641.

- Upgrades of audio-visual equipment were completed in Barker Library, Wunsch Conservation Lab, and Lewis Music Library.
- A large-scale mold outbreak in the Barker Library was remediated, as well as a number of smaller water intrusions.

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Social Justice

The Libraries centered equity, diversity, inclusion, and social justice (EDISJ) through our work and within our organization. A set of goals was established to focus on immediate and meaningful action on equity, diversity, inclusion, and social justice as identified by the Libraries' EDISJ Steering Committee. The action plan, while reflecting the Libraries' specific needs and intentions, [aligns well with MIT's Strategic Action Plan for Belonging, Achievement, and Composition](#).

- We completed the first year of our Association of College and Research Libraries Diversity Alliance Administrative Fellowship, held by Sylvia Figueroa-Ortiz. The fellowship is a managerial leadership learning opportunity for an early careerist from an underrepresented population who is interested in becoming an academic library administrator.
- Efforts continued to increase compositional diversity, especially at the management layer: 43% of new hires since FY2021 are from underrepresented minority groups with 26% of managers in FY2023 coming from underrepresented minority groups, up from 16% in the previous fiscal year.
- As part of a collaboration with the Ivy Plus Libraries Confederation, the Libraries became members of the [Library Accessibility Alliance](#) and contributed staff to their leadership.
- We contributed to the digitization of the *Libète* newspaper published in Haiti in Kreyòl. *Libète* is important to linguists, historians, anthropologists, and social justice activists as a resource that played a key role in advocating for Kreyòl as the primary language in education, administration, and legislation in Haiti.
- The Libraries hosted the exhibit *South Asia and the Institute: Transformative Connections* in the Maihaugen Gallery. Researched by current MIT faculty, students, alumni, and staff, this historical exhibit tells the remarkable story of South Asia at MIT and MIT in South Asia to honor the determination and grit of multiple generations of South Asians at the Institute. The exhibit is on view through October 13, 2023.
- We contributed to the successful opening of the new MIT Museum by conserving the Robert Robinson Taylor 1892 parchment MIT diploma. Taylor is MIT's first known Black graduate and the nation's first accredited African American architect. He is the great-grandfather of Valerie Jarrett, former senior advisor to President Barack Obama, whose family discovered the diploma in an attic in very poor condition and loaned it to MIT for exhibiting in the new museum following conservation treatment and imaging by the Libraries. Libraries and museum staff held a private viewing with Jarrett and other Taylor family descendants.

- A series of MIT Libraries news stories were launched in celebration of heritage months to showcase Distinctive Collections materials that the Libraries holds by and about these featured communities: National Arab American Heritage Month, Women’s History Month, Black History Month, and Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders Month.
- We continued projects for reparative description. These included remediating subject headings in the library catalog in line with the Library of Congress’ decision to replace the term “slaves” with “enslaved persons.” We also created EDISJ-focused style guidelines for description of individuals, identities, and contexts in Distinctive Collections. These actions form part of an effort to reprocess and redescribe collections from Black, Indigenous, and People of Color individuals and organizations. We also updated the term “foreign language materials” in collection descriptions to clarify what specific language(s) the materials are in, enhanced records for MIT’s key individuals [Robert Robinson Taylor](#), [Ellen Swallow Richards](#), and [William Barton Rogers](#) (acknowledging Rogers’ history as an enslaver), reprocessed the papers of activist and economist Phyllis A. Wallace, and updated the names of married women identified only by their husbands’ names.
- Workflows and documentation was developed to ensure the ethical and legal acquisition of rare materials across international borders.

Supporting Activities

People

Key positions that were vacated in FY2023 include program head for the Aga Khan Documentation Center and program head of IT Service Management. We successfully filled the positions of associate director for administrative services, director of human resources, head of distinctive collections, two curators for the Aga Khan Documentation Center Collections, library liaison for engineering, library liaison for energy and the environment, and an access services manager for the Rotch Library. We welcomed a total of 22 new staff members.

The Labor-Management Committee was launched, as provided for in the collective bargaining agreement with the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Council 93. Consisting of three people from management and three people from the union, the group is a consultative forum for the parties to discuss matters of mutual concern that affect bargaining unit employees and potentially resolve problems before they become the subject of grievances.

Organizational Effectiveness

The Libraries held a two-day, in-person staff conference—the first gathering of the staff *en masse* in three years. Called the Inconference, the event aimed to connect staff members to the Libraries’ vision and to each other. The program included keynote speeches by aerospace engineer Tiera Fletcher ’17 and African American Studies scholar Ruha Benjamin. There were also staff-led breakout sessions on topics of strategic importance, staff awards, and community-building activities.

There has been significant progress on projects aimed at improving internal communications within the Libraries, including hiring an internal communications coordinator, forming a cross-directorate Internal Communications Working Group, and launching quarterly “pulse” surveys of staff.

The Libraries launched the inter-directorate leadership team, a core group of operational managers who partner with the senior leadership team to build organizational effectiveness, grow the Libraries’ management culture, design and manage delivery of Libraries’ services, and build cohesion across the Libraries’ portfolio of projects and services.

Infrastructure

This year we undertook a major project to migrate the [Libraries’](#) website to new cloud hosting, significantly stabilizing our infrastructure. In collaboration with Information Systems and Technology, we joined MIT’s enterprise Amazon Web Services organization. In a first for the Libraries, we initiated a project to establish cloud preservation storage.

Fundraising

The MIT Libraries raised a total of \$935,088 in FY2023. The Libraries continue to work on raising the outstanding funds needed for the Building 14 Courtyard renovation.

Chris Bourg
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