

Institute-wide Task Force on the Future of Libraries

Preliminary Report

Executive Summary

October 24, 2016

The full report is available at <https://future-of-libraries.mit.edu/>.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

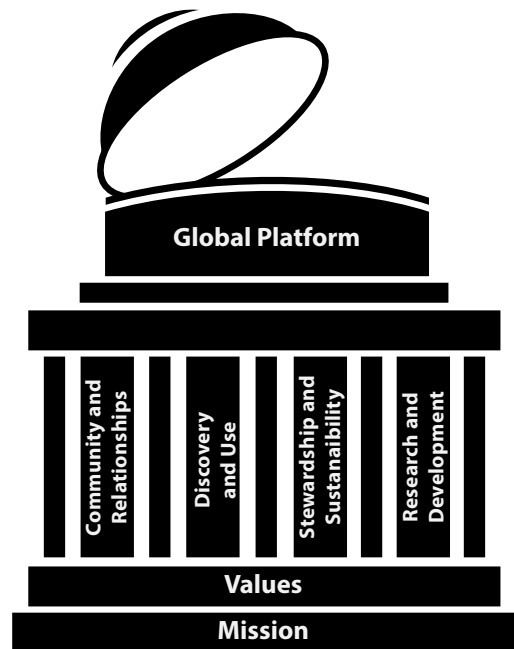
In October 2015, MIT Provost Martin A. Schmidt asked Chris Bourg, Director of Libraries, to convene and lead an Ad Hoc Task Force on the Future of Libraries. The Task Force was **charged** with seeking broad input from the MIT community and from domain experts on how the MIT Libraries ought to evolve to best advance the creation, dissemination, and preservation of knowledge, and to serve as a leader in the reinvention of research libraries.

At their core, libraries have always been about sharing information with their communities, advancing knowledge, and facilitating connection. The means by which researchers and scholars collect, access, and disseminate data, information, and research results will continue to transform rapidly. There are tremendous opportunities to improve the ability of scholars and the public alike to interact with each other and with information through new models of publishing; new mechanisms of collecting, storing, cataloging, and disseminating information; and new modes of discovery and use. MIT must take a leading role in the development of models that are open, equitable, and effective to ensure the most productive environment and tools for education, research, and discovery to tackle the world's most challenging problems. Additionally, the Institute must make certain that MIT research and educational materials are accessible to as wide a public as possible, and that the MIT community, broadly defined, has access to the best tools and resources for education and research.

In the full report, we describe a bold new vision for the library as an open global platform rooted in our shared values and mission; supported by innovative approaches to community and relationships, discovery and use, and stewardship and sustainability; and informed and enabled by an expanded emphasis on research and development. Our vision emphasizes the need for the libraries to embrace:

- an expansive definition of the communities they serve and the relationships and partnerships they encompass,
- a commitment to radically enhancing the discovery, access, and use of information,
- a responsibility for leadership in the long-term stewardship and sustainability of the scholarly record, and
- a new initiative to convene interdisciplinary research and development in information science and scholarly communication.

The four pillars we explored in our work—(1) the relationships to our local and global communities, (2) the discovery and use of information, (3) the stewardship of our scholarly resources and legacy, and (4) the commitment to researching and developing the library of the future—rest on a strong foundation of shared values and support the ambitious vision we offer for the future. Our future library is crowned by the global open platform we will work to build and that will serve MIT's global audience of knowledge creators, seekers, and curators and will allow other libraries and scholars to build new tools atop the work we've produced.



A Vision for MIT Libraries

This figure uses the bases and pillars of MIT’s iconic Great Dome to illustrate our vision because it occupies a central place in the history and culture of the Institute—in no small part because it has been the site of some of the most creative and ingenious [MIT hacks](#). In the best spirit of MIT, the Task Force hopes our platform inspires clever, creative, and productive “hacks,” in the form of innovative uses, tools, and programs that extend and amplify our work. In his charge to graduates at MIT’s 2016 Commencement, MIT President L. Rafael Reif encouraged graduates to “[hack the world](#)”; with this report and the vision we articulate, we encourage MIT and the world to “*hack the library.*”

This vision will be enabled through the 10 recommendations of the Task Force, detailed below.

COMMUNITY AND RELATIONSHIPS

Recommendation 1: The Task Force asserts that the MIT Libraries must be a global library serving a global university and its audiences. The MIT Libraries should conceive of the communities they serve as concentric circles, from the closely affiliated circle of current students, faculty, and staff to increasingly larger circles of cooperating scholars, MIT alumni, participants in MITx classes, the local Cambridge and Boston community, and the broader global community of scholars.

Recommendation 2: The Task Force recommends that the Institute create a new planning group to make specific recommendations regarding the redesign of the MIT Libraries’ physical spaces, reflecting the vision and themes of this report.

Recommendation 3: In supporting the research and teaching mission of MIT, the Libraries will provide educational opportunities to equip MIT community members with essential skills and habits for critically and effectively using information. It also will teach them the skills required to responsibly generate new knowledge and to create the platforms, systems, and networks to disseminate it, guided by the values held dear by MIT and by the library profession.

DISCOVERY AND USE

Recommendation 4: In support of the MIT mission and values of openness and service, the MIT Libraries should be a trusted vehicle for disseminating MIT research to the world.

Recommendation 5: The MIT Libraries will provide comprehensive digital access to content in our collections and/or content needed by MIT’s global community by expanding our capacity to acquire and make available born-digital content, and by embarking on an ambitious project to digitize much of our analog collections.

Recommendation 6: Through interdisciplinary institutional and external partnerships, the Libraries should generate open, interoperable content platforms that explore new ways of producing, using, sharing, and preserving knowledge and that promote revolutionary new methodologies for the discovery and organization of information, people, ideas, and networks.

Recommendation 7: The Task Force recommends that the Institute convene a new Ad Hoc Task Force on Open Access to review the current MIT Faculty Open Access Policy and its implementation with an eye toward revising and expanding current policies and practices, where appropriate, to further the Institute’s mission of disseminating the fruits of its research and scholarship as widely as possible.

STEWARDSHIP AND SUSTAINABILITY

Recommendation 8: Through its archival programs and practices, the MIT Libraries will serve as a durable, trusted repository for research objects produced at MIT and the metadata associated with MIT scholars and scholarship, as a continuation of their mission to serve as the “Institute’s memory” and record of research and learning.

Recommendation 9: The MIT Libraries should continue to actively engage with and, in many cases, provide leadership to collaborative global efforts to develop viable models and systems for the long-term stewardship and preservation of digital research.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Recommendation 10: The Task Force recommends that MIT establish an Initiative for Research in Information Science and Scholarly Communication, based in the MIT Libraries, to enable bold experimentation and to serve as a hub for best-in-class research on the great challenges in information science and scholarly communication.

Community and relationships, discovery and use, stewardship and sustainability, and research and development are the pillars that undergird the open global platform we seek to build. The openness of our platform and our commitment to a library that is interactive, responsive, and collaborative are embodied in our call for MIT and the world to hack the library. The success of our vision for the MIT Libraries will be realized through the creative ways in which scholars and global users exploit our resources, tools, services, spaces, and expertise to accelerate science and knowledge in the service of solving the world’s greatest challenges.