Activities provide great experiences

(Continued from page 4)

How can a loosely-organized collection of students gathered from across a mile-long campus create a home? That is a question you probably couldn't answer without spending an entire night watching rambling news stories of your time. You should not become tight and concise, copy your classes suffer or have members of your time group cease to recognize you because of your involvement in student activities.

My classes and the residents on my hall were challenging, but I did not want to confine myself to them alone. The Tech gave me another way of interacting with people bearing diverse ideas and backgrounds. That's what college is supposed to be about, and any decisions you make in the next four years should bear this in mind.

Join up!

Column/Simson L. Garfinkel

Libraries' catalog needs automation

When I was in eleventh grade, visiting MIT for the first time, I was horrified to learn that the Institution did not have a computerized card catalog. Computerized card catalogs allow the rapid selection and location of books on a variety of topics. They can save the time required to find a book from hours to minutes.

I had used such systems at the University of Pennsylvania and Bryn Mawr College five years ago. Today, MIT does not have such a system.

Director of Libraries Jay K. Lucker outlined his plans for an automated, computerized circulation system. The system was not yet complete when I last visited MIT.

Two years ago, it seemed that such a system would never be built. MIT is one of America's foremost technical schools, yet it does not have an online card catalog. The system cannot be easily networked with other computer systems on campus, such as Project Athena. The system does not allow inquiries over the telephone.

Lucker said that the system would record borrowing patterns at MIT and that his staff would be able to keep track of this information. The system does not pose serious questions regarding individual privacy. An automated circulation system can be used to compile a list of every book that a student has borrowed. The MIT Committee on Privacy has failed to address such issues.

Two years ago, it seemed that while MIT would not have a state-of-the-art computer system for its libraries, it would at least have a usable system. So far no visible progress has been made.

It is upsetting that MIT, one of the foremost technical schools in the world, still has no online card catalog system. Other schools that had online card catalogs — not mere circulation systems — years ago.

Other universities have designed and built their own systems, employing students to do the work. Perhaps Jay Lucker does not believe that MIT students are capable of designing and implementing such a system. I suspect that the MITF will be finished with Kendall Square sometime this year. We may see a computerized circulation system in the MIT Libraries.

I encourage freshmen to use past/fail for this kind of experience. It is a different and more important education than your classes can give you.

Of course, it is important not to let an activity drain too much of your time. You should not lose your classes suffer or have members of your time group cease to recognize you because of your involvement in student activities. It is upsetting that MIT, one of the foremost technical schools in the world, still has no online card catalog. The system cannot be easily networked with other computer systems on campus, such as Project Athena. The system does not allow inquiries over the telephone.

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