Study ranks MIT library 39th

By Mary Condello

The MIT library system needs no major changes despite being ranked only 39th out of 101 in a study of university libraries, according to Director of Libraries Jay K. Lucker.

The study, which was conducted for 1985-86 by the Association of Research Libraries, was based on the number of volumes held, number of volumes added, number of current serials, size of staff and total expenditures.

Lucker argued that the rel-
atively low ranking is misleading because it depends on the size of the library. MIT's library system is relatively small, and is where it belongs with respect to size and activities, Lucker asserted.

Comparing MIT to a rank in terms of number of volumes alone, he said, proves books for the disciplines involved. Institutions with large humanit-

ies departments, especially large humanities depart-
mants, must contain an enormous number of volumes encom-
sassing such diverse fields as ancient Greek and Roman litera-
ture, history and modern art. MIT does not have a large hu-

manities department; as a result, its library system does not have large volumes in those fields, Lucker explained.

"MIT's strongest disciplines are dependent on volumes," Lucker asserted, referring to the sciences and engineering fields. Science and engineering are relatively strong disciplines compared to humanities, so there is not as much material as in the older fields, he continued.

MIT's library system is stronger than the ARL statistics would lead one to believe, Lucker insisted. Three or four years ago, MIT took part in a comprehensive study with seven other libraries which contain technological holdings. MIT had the largest collection by 50 percent, Lucker reported.

Libraries need more funding

But Lucker did admit that the libraries face some pressing problems. "The basic problems facing the MIT library system are financial," Lucker said. Journal acquisition is the biggest problem, he said. There have been books as increased in the number of journals purchased and an increase in the cost of acquiring journals.

"The decline of the dollar is driving the budget most," Lucker said. Approximately one-third of the journals purchased by MIT are bought with foreign currency, he explained. The dollar's decline makes foreign journals more expensive in terms of US currency, he explained.

The MIT libraries have can-
celled some little used journal subscriptions.

Acquisitions of books and serials of the library staff are two other areas which require more funding, according to Lucker. Lucker hopes that the Campaign for the Future, the Institute's fund-raising drive, will increase endowment funds for the libraries.

Lack of space is another major problem facing the MIT libraries, according to Lucker. There is an off-campus storage facility in Central Square which holds old material. But with the exception of an enlargement of the Rotch Library, which houses the archi-
tecture and planning collection, there are no plans for building new libraries or expanding current ones, Lucker said.

We are maximizing our re-
sources by using technology," Lucker said. One method of combating the space problem is the computerization of the li-

brary cataloging system, he said. "Baron," named after MIT's President William Barton Rogers, is an online cata-
logue and circulation system which includes records for ma-

terials acquired and catalogued by all MIT libraries since 1974, re-
testers earlier works, and materi-
als currently in order.

To supplement the collections in the MIT library system, MIT belongs to the Boston Library Consortium, which allows MIT students and faculty to borrow materials from other Boston-area university libraries, as well as the Boston Public Library.

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