Welcome to the MIT Libraries

This guide is intended to introduce you to the wide range of resources — collections, services, and staff — available in the MIT Libraries. The Institute’s major collections are housed in five divisional libraries: Barker (engineering), Science, Dewey (social sciences and management), Rotch (architecture and planning), and Humanities. These are, in addition, a number of branch libraries that specialize in more narrowly defined fields including aeronautics and astronautics, marine, industrial relations, earth and atmospheric sciences, health sciences, and visual materials. Page two of this guide has detailed descriptions of each library.

The Libraries’ staff are eager to assist you with your information needs. Among the services offered are reference and information assistance, interlibrary borrowing, computerized literature searching, photocopying, access to other area libraries, and instruction in library research methods. Tours and seminars are available throughout the year. You may obtain information at any reference desk.

A key feature of the MIT Libraries is the online catalogue, Barton. Public access terminals are available throughout the libraries and access is also provided through the campus network and via dial-up. See page three of this guide for connection instructions. Barton contains records for all materials acquired by MIT since 1963. There are manual catalogues for pre-1963 materials not in Barton.

Please don’t hesitate to ask for assistance. In order to borrow materials from the Libraries you will need a barcoded-library card. These cards can be issued to members of the MIT community at any circulation desk at any time. We hope to see you in the Libraries soon and often.

Jay K. Lucker
Director of Libraries

Coming — CD-Barton

During the late 1980’s, the Libraries began planning for a new online public access catalogue to supplement the online catalogue component of CD-Barton, a minicomputer-based library system, Barton. As the libraries investigated the possibilities, it became clear that a CD-ROM/RAID area network configuration offered the best fit in terms of available technology, re-use of existing hardware, and overall flexibility. The MIT community was invited to join in the selection process and many accepted the Libraries invitation to try out and comment on the catalogue systems offered by our three ‘finalist’ vendors. With your help, we decided on the system provided by Marive, Incorporated.

Now, after much development and planning, we’re ready to start installing the system. Current plans call for a phased implementation beginning with the Hayden Library in January. The new catalogue, to be called CD-Barton, will eventually be available in all library units and will offer:

- Improved indexing.
- Powerful searching options, including anyword and boolean searching.
- Currency of data that is as good as it is in the current, centralized catalogue.
- Up-to-date library location and circulation status information for items with records in the database.
- Redundancy. Downtime problems associated with the centralized catalogues will be eliminated.

The Libraries will use MITnet for the transfer of bibliographic update and circulation status files between our central circulation/cataloguing machine and the various library units. These update files will be transferred to CD-Barton servers. Circulation status files will be transferred daily. Bibliographic updates will be transferred every two weeks and will accumulate on the servers until the CD is remastered. At that time, those updates be integrated into the CD.

We’re excited about CD-Barton, not only because of the enhancements it offers our patrons right now, but also because we see it as a first step toward the truly distributed library and information system of the future. Watch for more announcements and please give CD-Barton a try!

It’s three a.m. and Andrew is typing the next to last entry in a bibliography for the econ paper that’s due in eight hours. Checking the photocopy of the article, he’s got the author, the article title, even the page numbers, but nowhere on the photocopy, or in any of his notes can he find the journal name and volume number. Great! He’d hoped to sleep in until just before class, but now he’ll have to head over to the library early, look for the journal and come back and type it in. He could phone, but he’ll still have to get up early...or he could ask OWL.

Andrew dials into his Athena account, and types OWL at the prompt. He chooses “social sciences” as his topic, and types in his request, listing the information he does have. He’s asleep within minutes of logging out.

It’s Mallory’s turn to check the OWL queue for Dewey Library, and she sees Andrew’s question shortly after she gets into the office. She checks an index to identify the missing journal title and volume number. It’s nine a.m. when she e-mails Andrew’s answer and lets him know she’s marked the question “done.”

Sound like the Libraries’ version of Athena’s On-Line Consultant? It is, and it’s coming soon. Look for OWL (Online With Libraries) to debut early in the 1992 calendar year. OWL lets you ask a library-related question that you might otherwise have to save for “regular” hours. Perhaps it’s the middle of the afternoon, but you can’t call the reference desk because your roommate’s on the phone. OWL can help then too.

To access OWL, you’ll need an Athena account. You can use the system from either a regular Athena workstation or from a dialup machine. Communication with the libraries may be “live” if the information specialist for your topic is logged in at the same time you are, but questions for the libraries may be asked at any time and will be answered via e-mail if you’ve already logged out. On a workstation, running the X windows system, notification to and from OWL will normally be via zephyr messages. If you are using OWL through dialup, messages will simply appear on your screen, or in your e-mail queue.

Turnaround time will be within twenty-four hours excluding weekends and holidays. Occasionally a complete answer may take longer, but you’ll always get a status report on your question within a day’s time.

Planned as one choice in a menu of library services to be available through Athena, OWL won’t take the place of a visit to the library and a librarian. In other words, we’d still like to see you. But if a visit to the libraries isn’t on your schedule, you can always ask OWL.