Rotch Library Instruction Plan
April 2006

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Rotch User Groups

Students

Rotch Library's primary user group is the student body of the School of Architecture and Planning. Enrollment figures for Fall 2004 (from the Registrar's office) were:

562 Graduate
 57 Undergraduate

Of this group, 256 (46 undergraduate , 210 graduate) are Architecture students and 232 (11 undergraduate, 221 graduate are in the Department of Urban Studies and Planning or DUSP.) There are also 131 graduate students in the Program in Media Arts and Sciences.

Faculty & Teaching Staff

There are approximately 49 members of the faculty and teaching staff in the School of Architecture. DUSP has approximately 74 faculty members. (Figures derived from the School of Architecture and Planning faculty lists on the web site.).

Administrative Staff

Our user community also includes a number of administrative staff, faculty assistants etc.

Broader MIT Community

We serve many users beyond the School of Architecture and Planning. For instance, many undergraduates are enrolled in Architecture and Planning courses that fulfill their HASS requirement. We also serve users with an interest in our subject areas. For instance, students in the Sloan School may need help with researching real estate issues and Engineering students may need our architecture and construction resources.

Current Instruction Activity at Rotch

Graduate Students in DUSP

This is where the bulk of our instruction is currently targeted. In addition to doing sessions for most of the thesis prep classes HCED (Housing, Community and Economic Development), CDD (City Design and Development), and for thesis students at the (CRE) Center for Real Estate we have done sessions for many other courses. We have been offering increasing numbers of EndNote sessions to DUSP students. These have become very popular, particularly now that DUSP has made this software available to students free of charge.

Graduate Students in Architecture

This is a group that has received relatively little formal instruction in recent years. Last year the GIS Specialist did sessions for one of the studios. There have been a couple of other sessions geared toward architecture students (11.016 which is also offered as 4.211J, for instance) but other than that this group just receives an orientation at the beginning of the year.

Undergraduate

Though not our primary user group, we do offer some instruction to undergraduates enrolled in DUSP courses. We regularly offer library instruction for 11.123 Big Plans. With somewhat less regularity we've done sessions for 11.THT, an undergraduate thesis seminar.

What our users need to know

Our users need to know:

- Where to get help –what services we can provide.

- The variety of material available through the MIT Libraries.

- The difference between Barton and Vera and how to use them to find journal articles, books and other information.

- The major databases for their subject areas.

- Search techniques. How to search databases effectively to get the information they need.

- How to evaluate and select information sources for their specific research.

- What we provide that Google cannot.

- The possibilities of what is out there even though they can't be taught all of the details in a class.

- Technical skills –scanning for instance –not a priority for us but we should provide documentation.

Our instruction efforts should be guided by these information needs.

Strategies and Goals

We will focus our efforts on graduate students but continue to reach undergraduates as opportunities arise. (ie Big Plans, DUSP Undergrad Thesis Prep) In particular we will focus our efforts on DUSP as they are our users with the heaviest research need. With the 2005 departure of our former head and urban planning librarian and the arrival of a new head, DUSP is ripe for renewing contact and marketing our services. The need for library instruction in DUSP was clearly expressed by some DUSP faculty during the interviews for a new head of Rotch. This sentiment has been echoed by students in library sessions and one on one research consultations. We need to capitalize on this desire to meet the need for instruction that has been expressed.

We will try to reach our users as early as appropriate in their MIT careers. Reaching students as they arrive can help ensure that they learn quickly about the resources and services we offer that will help them while they are here. On the other hand, many students may not need library resources beyond reserve reading until their second year here. Being familiar with the curriculum of the school will enable us to time our efforts in a way that makes the most sense to our users.

Library Tours

Orientation tours are a key component of our instruction and outreach. Tours provide us with a chance to meet incoming students and show the human face of the library to users who may not be reached via course-related instruction. (Especially architecture students.)

In recent years the scheduling of tours has been problematic. The scheduling of sessions by the DUSP office has not taken into account the appropriateness of the timing. In addition, while in the past we had separate tours for PhD and Masters students, these tours were combined into one this year. This year's tour wasn't scheduled until the end of the first week of classes, well after other orientation activities. Because of this only 3 students out of the entire incoming DUSP population (including PhD students) attended –clearly the timing was not convenient. In subsequent training sessions for DUSP students attendees have expressed the wish to learn about library resources early on. Similar scheduling issues have occurred in recent years with our Architecture tours. Timing our orientations more appropriately and making them more

substantive (as we did this year) will help us reach this goal. We need to work with the Head of DUSP to convey the importance of orientation to DUSP students who are our heaviest library users. We also need to meet with the Director of the Architecture Department to get our orientations scheduled at times that enable us to reach the greatest number of students. If these orientations are more widely attended we'll have taken the first step in getting students exposure to our services, and perhaps more important, given them faces to connect to the library. The Instruction Coordinator and Head of Rotch will work with the Departments with the goal of getting adequate and appropriate times for orientations in Fall 2006.

Course-related Instruction

We've been building our course-related instruction this year and need to continue doing so. It has always been a challenge to insert ourselves into classes, much less get faculty to give up class time but the sessions are always positively received.

In the past couple of years a two pronged approach has worked fairly well. Contacting faculty, particularly those with a research component in their class has given us some success. Subject specialists will make contact with professors in their areas and offer instruction sessions geared towards the projects in their courses. In order to be successful we'll need to explain in fairly concrete terms what we can offer. It may help to give examples of specific successful sessions that we've given in the past. This will help to clarify what we bring to the table as partners in the learning process. By leveraging these past successes we should be able to accomplish new ones which, in turn, can be used to reach other classes.

Because it is often difficult to get faculty to give up class time for library instruction we should offer the option of doing the session outside of class time (while explaining that doing during class time increases the likelihood of attendance.) This has worked in the past year for 11.233 (Research Design and Methodology) and 11.201 (Gateway Planning Action.)

Teaching Assistants

In the last 2 years we've had some success in promoting our instruction services via the Teaching Assistants. This works well for several reasons:

- They often have first hand experience of either working with librarians or attending successful library sessions in previous years.

- We see many TAs on a day to day basis in a way that we don't see all faculty members.

- TAs have been effective advocates of our services to students and to the professors they are working for.

We should continue to promote instruction via the Teaching Assistants where appropriate. In addition to contacting the TAs directly we could mention the instruction we can offer when TAs are working with the library on reserves lists and during our orientations.

Plan for Increasing Course-Related Instruction

Here are some possible strategies for increasing our course-related instruction.

Identify all of the courses where instruction is appropriate. Subject specialists could do this by:

- Examining course listings in their subject areas to find classes that seem likely to have a research need, paying particular attention to covering all thesis prep classes.

- Examine course syllabi (when possible) to get more information on assignments that may benefit from library instruction. (We will work with the Reserves Coordinator to get copies of course syllabi as she receives them.)

Once courses are identified we can employ the strategies mentioned above (through faculty or TAs) to arrange for instruction.

Here is a list of current courses that we currently support. We should continue to do so in coming years. (Could put in an appendix)

Undergraduate

11.123 Big Plans
11.THT Thesis Research Design Seminar

Graduate

11.401 Introduction to Housing and Community Development
11.201 Gateway Planning Action (Required for all incoming DUSP students but doesn't have a research component.)
11.233 Research Design and Methodology

Thesis Prep Sessions

In addition to finding the "regular courses" with a research component, these classes offer a clear entre to our users. We should pay special attention to these courses. The students are receptive and need the information then. These are a must do.

- 4.THG
- 11.THG.CDD
- 11.THG HCED
- CRE Thesis Seminar
- IDRP

By Fall 2006 we will make contact with instructors for all graduate thesis prep courses in the School of Architecture and Planning with the goal of having a library session for each.

EndNote

For the last few years we have offered 2-3 endnote sessions geared primarily to DUSP students. These sessions, often requested by the students themselves, have generated high interest. We will continue to offer sessions in EndNote and possibly Refworks. In addition to showing students these products these sessions give us an opportunity to highlight library resources and strengthen connections between ourselves and our users.

Currently, only one librarian at Rotch knows enough about EndNote to teach it. It would be useful to spread this knowledge amongst the rest of the staff, including support staff who would like opportunities to help with instruction.

Other Workshops

In the past we have experimented with workshops that weren't tied to a specific course but highlighted researching various types of information or using specific resources. For the most part these have not been successful here. No further attempts are recommended at this time but we may want to revisit this if a new tool or resource generates interest or would be especially useful to our community (as happened with EndNote.)

One fairly successful example that to some extent falls into this category is instruction geared toward the students in Gateway Planning Action (11.201). This class is required of all incoming DUSP masters students. While we have the potential to reach many students through this class, no library research is required for the course. This year we worked through the TAs to offer instruction to this group even though they didn't need it for the class. They helped market the instruction to the class (being clear that it while it wasn't needed for Gateway it would be useful for other work) but it was given outside of class time and attracted enough students that it was worth doing. Given the success this year we should continue this approach, either marketing through the TAs or the instructors.

Instruction Support for Visual Resources

The integration of RVC and Rotch and the rollout of the digital images pilot project will have implications for instruction (and reference). We will need to define the level of support we can provide for the digital images repository and incorporate this support into our instruction efforts. In order to do this we will need to ensure that staff have the expertise needed to support our users as they use our visual resources.

GIS Services

There are an increasing number of people using GIS for their research in the School of Architecture and Planning. GIS staff could reach the SOAP community more effectively and efficiently with better integration with classes that naturally have a geographic/ spatial analysis component --including urban planning, regional planning and development, transportation planning, site planning, and real estate development. Rotch subject specialists can help play an important role in communicating the types of spatial data analysis services and options available through the MIT GIS lab during their regular interaction with faculty. Subject specialists can also work with GIS staff to incorporate GIS instruction when appropriate.

Research Consultations

While this plan emphasizes group instruction it is important to note the important part that research consultations play in our instruction efforts. Through these consultations we meet our users specific research needs in a personalized way that isn't possible to achieve in a group setting. Increasing our group instruction will enable us to reach larger numbers of people more efficiently than one-on-one sessions. On the other hand, more of our users will learn about the possibility of meeting individually with a librarian if we publicize this service during instruction sessions.

Self Help Tools –Increasing Self Sufficiency

Subject Pages

Another key element of our instruction plan should be our web pages. These have the advantage of being available at all hours so that students don't have to have to wait to see a librarian to get the information they need. These also can serve as springboards for live instruction efforts. Some of our current subject pages are very good but many would be improved by the addition of more content. These pages can help us to convey the knowledge of Rotch subject librarians when no in person help is available. They also serve as a resource for library staff who are trying to answer questions outside of their area of expertise. In the 2006-2007 year we will examine our subject pages and add more content where appropriate.

Course Pages

In the past we have produced relatively few course pages. An example of an excellent page is the one for City Design & Development (4.252J/11.301J). We should create pages for more of the courses we support. This may be an alternative for classes where an instruction session isn't possible. As a first step we might want to try to create pages for Riots, Strikes and Conspiracies in American History (11.015J). This is a class with a required research project and one where students often need library assistance.

Future Plans:

Beginning in the 2007-2008 year (or earlier) we will explore instruction possibilities within the Department of Architecture. Likely candidates for instruction are the Building Technology and History Theory and Criticism groups. Both of these programs have research needs that could possibly be served by instruction sessions.

Undergraduates

As we all know, the Institute is taking a closer look at the Undergraduate curriculum (see http://web.mit.edu/committees/edcommons/) The work of the Task Force on the Undergraduate Education Commons will no doubt have ramifications for the instruction efforts of all the Libraries, including Rotch. As the changes in the curriculum become clearer we should work to make sure that we are tailoring or instruction to meet these needs.

Faculty

No targeted instruction to faculty is proposed at this time. We should continue to support our faculty in their research efforts, make them aware of relevant resources as they are acquired and show them how to use our resources effectively as appropriate.

Assessment

In order to make sure our efforts are paying off we'll need to assess them. Currently we have no method for assessing our "in person sessions." We've used evaluation forms after specific sessions but they really tell us very little. In the past Dewey Library has assessed the sessions by polling attendees at the end of the semester (ie several months after) to get feedback. This is something we should explore doing, perhaps with an online tool like Zoomerang. Getting feedback from faculty who attend, and even immediate feedback/suggestions from attendees can be of limited help as well. (at least for things like timing.)

Assessment of our self help tools such as subject and course pages would be useful as well. To some extent we can measure use by getting statistics on the number of hits each page receives. We should talk with Nicole or another member of the Web Advisory Group to explore other possible methods of assessing the effectiveness of our pages.

Resources

Staff

Because all of Rotch librarian positions have responsibilities for collections, reference and instruction we face the challenge, shared throughout the MIT Libraries of balancing competing responsibilities and priorities. We will need to ensure that instruction responsibilities are shared so that we can implement this key component of the Libraries' Strategic Plan while keeping jobs realistic and sustainable.

We also have non-librarian staff who have both the interest and ability to help with our instruction efforts. Circulation and processing staff have trained staff (in Aleph for instance) and helped with user instruction. We should continue to explore ways to involve all staff in our efforts.

Space

The available space for instruction within Rotch is limited. For hands-on sessions our only real option is the DIRC which is quite a distance from where our users are. We should explore ways to offer hands-on instruction within Rotch. This might be as simple as having participants bring laptops. The work that our LTE is doing on creating a collaborative space in one of the study alcoves may result in useful instruction space as well.