

The Georgia Institute of Technology Library and Information Center would like consideration for the Excellence in Libraries Award.

Introduction

The Georgia Institute of Technology, founded in 1885, is located in the heart of Atlanta, Georgia. With approximately 18,000 students and nearly 900 academic faculty, Georgia Tech is recognized as one of the nation's top 10 public universities and top 5 graduate engineering schools (U.S. News and World Report 2006). Georgia Tech's vision is to "define the technological research University of the 21st century and educate the leaders of a technologically driven world".

The Library and Information Center at Georgia Tech is comprised of two adjoining structures known as the West and East towers. These buildings, built in 1952 and 1969 respectively, comprise 220,000 square feet and hold over 4.3 million volumes. With an annual collections budget of approximately \$5.2 million, the Library provides access to collections of more than 270 online databases, 30,000 electronic books, and 23,000 e-journals. A branch Architecture Library contains 45,000 items.

At the beginning of 2001 the Library was a static organization. Annual library visits in the prior 15 years dropped an average of 5% per year. Interiors were drab and scarcely improved over several decades, and a high percentage of user space was given over to collections. Outdated service points were either misperceived or ignored by users. Our digital agenda lacked cohesion and direction, and we were excluded from campus discussions concerning technology, pedagogy and learning. A majority of students and faculty complained that the Library was disconnected from the University and inconsequential to their academic success. We had become the appendix of the larger body.

In mid-2001, the newly-arrived Library Dean initiated an environmental scan to identify opportunities to contribute to the learning and research agendas of the University. We began to listen to students and faculty. They told us to move swiftly and effectively to provide digital content and to make our services evident and relevant. A 5-year strategic plan was crafted with both librarian and staff participation. Our work to reinvent the Georgia Tech Library continues to engage the majority of our employees, along with a growing cadre of student and faculty collaborators. This application traces key elements of the strategic plan and our relative success in attaining its vision. We present evidence of 5 years of rapid transformation and positive outcomes that garner campus acclaim and register a national impact. We believe that we represent a *library of excellence*.

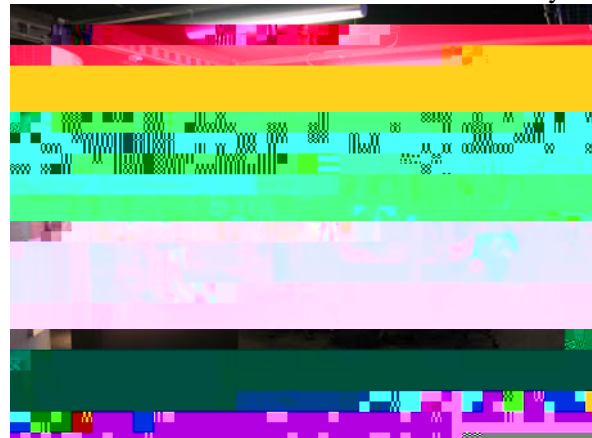
- **Resource Center (Spring 2006)**

As student support units on campus took note of the hordes of students descending on the Library, several primary agencies asked to be included in our setting. We and OIT complied by imagining the Resource Center. The Library targeted a little-used space of 3,500 square feet to renovate with funds provided by OIT. The Resource Center became the new home of OIT's walk-in computer support functions (with doubled hours to match students' long hours of need), an evening hours facility for the most popular tutoring program on campus, and the first storefront for the University's new Undergraduate Academic Advising office. A sophisticated conference room was added that doubles as a second presentation rehearsal studio, and as an intimate meeting site for the Counseling Center's monthly "student self help" seminars that relocated to the Library.

- **East Commons in partnership with OIT and Auxiliary Services (Fall 2006)**

The East Commons, our most recent experiment in space development, is a collaboration with OIT and Auxiliary Services. In March 2005, the Library, OIT and our Student Advisory Council (mentioned elsewhere in this application) conducted focus groups to determine programming components for an 8,000 square foot renovation on the first floor of the East building. Accommodations for groups of students were repeatedly suggested. We responded with these elements for the East Commons:

- Jazzman's Café (7:30am to 11:00 pm) and a suite of vending machines;
- 30 group computer stations in two configurations to facilitate group interaction;
- relaxed study zones with variously-shaped task tables and chairs on casters for easy reconfiguration and movement;
- a study zone that transforms into a performance space for an audience of 100, with 80" rear projection screen, and digital video capture of performances featuring the best and brightest individuals at Georgia Tech;
- a ceiling infrastructure that supports myriad options for custom lighting; insertions of plasma screens, wireless projectors, and other technologies to support student learning; fabric walls of various shapes and textures that can be relocated in moments; light systems that paint various color washes onto peripheral walls; and power cords on retractable reels for instant power supply to any desktop device;
- exhibit space for student art and stimulating topics sponsored by academic departments; and
- a commons coordinator and assistant coordinator who monitor and adjust the technologies, fabric walls, lighting and furnishings; they also curate the student and faculty performances and art that infuse the facility.



We discover that learning commons, if thoughtfully conceived and nurtured, can be epicenters of student endeavor. The opening of the Library's West and East Commons has more than doubled the annual Library door count of 2001. Our customer-centered process for creating compelling learning spaces is touted by campus administrators as an important model for other units to emulate. The Library's deep partnership with the Office of Information Technology demonstrates the power of collaboration, and suggests new relationships. Undergraduate Academic Advising, a tuto

transformed spaces and seek our advice. We are invited to tell our story at state, regional and national forums.

*“Before any new buildings begin construction, the planners should follow the library’s example.” – Opinions Editor, *Technique*, Friday, March 11, 2005.*

Rules and regulations were rigid, punitive, and not sensitive to the Tech consumer lifestyle.

In 2001, we began to mold library policies to accommodate student needs. We addressed these needs by:

- increasing checkout periods for all students from 1 month to 1 semester with 2 subsequent renewals
- eliminating the overdue fine to reduce conflict with student customers, and increasing the recall-overdue fine to foster fair use
- purchasing laptops, digital cameras, camcorders, and wireless cards for circulation.
- subsidizing ILL requests (up to \$25)
- increasing hours of operation to 24 hours / 5 days a week with full service at both Information Services and Circulation desks
- allowing food and drink throughout the Library, and cell phone use in designated areas

Students, faculty, and staff now enjoy a more relaxed and friendly library. Customer compliments (and offers of tips!) are frequently directed to Circulation staff who are no longer associated with negativity and are given the freedom to imagine other improvements to services.

Our partnerships with campus service entities were beginning to flourish, but we had no equivalent partnership with students.

In January 2005, Library Administration was approached by several outstanding student leaders who complimented our recent efforts to transform the Library and offered to help us. At our suggestion, they enthusiastically agreed to comprise a *Student Advisory Council* to guide our work and to assist with capturing student opinion. The Council meets at least every other week at a working lunch hosted by the Library Dean. Graduating Council members nominate their successors from among rising student leaders. In its first 20 months of existence, the Council:

- influenced the campus Technology Fee Committee to award a total of \$470,000 in back-to-back annual requests for commons’ workstations, peripherals and software;
- helped Library administration to acquire \$250,000 from an alumni reunion class for the East Commons;
- participated in running focus groups and analyzing resultant data that produced programming for the East Commons;
- insisted that they present the Library’s “Cinderella story” to the University President’s Executive Board,
- launched an annual freshman book reading program for the University, and
- provided a working member to the Library’s recently appointed Strategic Planning Task Force.

The Library’s accountability to the University and its students is strongly enhanced with a Student Advisory Council. The Vice Provost for Academic Affairs proclaims that the Library’s model for

officially engaging student opinion and ownership should be broadly adopted across campus. Visiting college and university libraries ask for guidance on starting their own student advisory groups.

We saw a need to help students identify with the Library and to instill in them a sense of ownership and pride in place.

Feedback from students coupled with helpful insights provided in *Library as Place: Rethinking Roles, Rethinking Space* (2005 CLIR no. 129) and *Libraries Designed for Learning* (2003 CLIR no. 122) lead us to believe that libraries can be more than study halls with books and service points. Many of the peripheral enterprises that we host result from students actively seeking our collaboration in their creative endeavors and stress-relieving activities. Here are some of the ways we help students to take pride in their library:

- We display student-produced art throughout the Library on a frequent cycle.
- We host weekly meetings of the Photography Club and BuzzStudios (a feature-length movie-making club).
- We invite a cappella groups and student musicians to provide regularly scheduled daytime performances, and spontaneous evening performances.
- We provide space and assistance to student service organizations that: offer free food and drink to students during final exams; sponsor clothing drives and fund-raisers for neighborhood families; provide student leadership and student portfolio assistance.
- We host reviews of student-produced short films, documentaries and multimedia shows; and host Georgia Tech's participation in Campus MovieFest, the largest student-produced short-film festival in the United States.
- We host poetry readings and special engagements in the East Commons' performance space, and student book club meetings in Jazzman's Café.
- We host a student *game night* at the start of the academic year.
- We provide a "live" venue in the East Commons for the campus radio station to interview special guests.
- We refurbished and extended access to a handsome meeting room on the 7th floor of the Library with a terrific view of campus and market the space to special student groups and academic departments as a superior facility for exclusive functions.
- We improved the amount and quality of comfortable furniture for relaxation and informal gatherings.
- We prominently display a popular DVD movie collection and purchased an array of technology "toys" for checkout (laptops, camcorders, digital cameras).

Students who first experience our facility on special occasions are likely to return for study and productivity. These initiatives enhance the Library's reputation as it supports the larger aspirations and needs of students. The shift in student sentiment and identity is away from "the library" and toward "my library".

Many patrons were not aware of the services and resources we offered.

Since 2002, the Library has used feedback and assessment to suggest needed change. The Library plans and develops strategically, and our goals are influenced by an understanding of user needs and expectations. Based on data gathered from focus groups, surveys, LibQUAL+, and informal dialogues with our students and faculty, we consider their level of satisfaction with and awareness of services and resources so that improvements are identified and adjustments made.

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II. Expand instruction and training programs for students, faculty, staff, and alumni to provide tools and competencies for navigating the Internet and finding, filtering, evaluating, and using information effectively.

We provide Georgia Tech students, faculty and staff with valuable resources. We seek opportunities to support their education and training needs. With the use of our course and program-integrated instruction, campus collaborations, website services program, Open URL link resolution and usability studies, we provide our constituencies with the skills and resources necessary to use information effectively.

- **Engage in campus collaborations for students**

Instructional opportunities have arisen from several significant new campus collaborations over the last few years.

- We provide LaTeX training in partnership with the Graduate Student Government Association and the Graduate Studies & Research Program. LaTeX is a high-quality typesetting system designed for the production of technical and scientific documents and is the recommended standard for thesis preparation at Georgia Tech. The Library provides the only organized support systems for students to develop the needed skills set. **x**

practices for web usability studies. The studies' findings are analyzed by the Web Program Manager, who then guides the development of new iterations. We strongly believe in iterative testing, realizing that the website is really never a finished product, but rather a continuously evolving service.

ourselves technically, legally, economically, and organizationally to the full dimensions of the task.” By 2002, the Library moved assertively toward managing licensed electronic resources and campus-generated digital intellectual output. Hence, we have worked aggressively to address the usability of digital information resources over time and across technologies. We began by establishing operational digital preservation networks and cooperative organizational models to manage them. Our technologies and organizational model are being adopted by other consortia in Alabama, Michigan, South Africa, and in the UK via a Joint Information Systems Committee-supported initiative. The Library is advising on this project which will result in the preservation of institutional repository content at the major U.K. universities. More specifically, our deep and ongoing commitment to developing and disseminating replicable, digital preservation strategies has resulted in the following list of accomplishments:

- **MetaArchive Cooperative (2004-present)**

We co-founded the MetaArchive Cooperative (<http://www.metaarchive.org>) with the libraries of Emory University, Auburn University, Florida State University, University of Louisville, and Virginia Tech. In 2004, the cooperative was awarded one of eight original digital preservation partnerships in the Library of Congress’ National Digital Information and Infrastructure Preservation Program. The Cooperative has successfully implemented the MetaArchive Preserva

- **LOCKSS Alliance and related projects (2005-present)**

The Library is a founding member of the LOCKSS Alliance. This alliance was established to sustain and expand the development of the LOCKSS software for digital preservations. Related LOCKSS projects include:

- The Association of Southeastern Research Libraries electronic theses and dissertation preservation network, the 2nd LOCKSS Private Network of its kind in existence.
- The Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations' international ETD preservation effort.
- The USGPO's government document preservation efforts.

Due to our leading efforts in digital preservation and repository building, we have had the esteemed opportunity to work in cooperation with innovative national and international organizations to address the usability of digital resources over time and across technologies.

V. Provide a dynamic staffing and management infrastructure to facilitate the emergence of value-added services; support professional development opportunities; enhance recruitment opportunities; facilitate needed enhancements via staff enthusiasm and commitment.

As evident in other areas of this document, we actively support and encourage professional development. We understand that having a well-informed, trained, and progressively changing body of talents helps to further our goals of service, collection building, preservation, and collaboration. Our dedication to the library profession and our staff is proven through Library support for the teaching of campus courses, creation of a library conference, workshops and staff training opportunities as well as the continual evaluation and improvement to the Library's recruitment and promotion processes.

The Library needed to find ways to engage in the retention efforts of the university.

Since 2001, Library staff has contributed to student retention efforts in response to a major campus focus by participating in the following programs.

- **GT 1000 program**

We dramatically increased our participation in the Georgia Tech Success Program's Freshmen Seminar course, GT 1000, since 2001. Library staff now instruct more sessions per year of this college "survival skills" class (a major campus initiative designed to increase retention rates) than any other external department on campus. Since 2005, one instructor/librarian has served on the Advisory Committee that directs curriculum changes, sets learning outcomes for participating students, and develops and implements training for all classroom facilitators/ instructors. We encourage and fully support this endeavor for MLS faculty and Master's level staff who unanimously agree that the experience is personally rewarding, a valuable way to serve the Institute, and a unique opportunity to gain insight into the lives of Georgia Tech undergraduates. As an additional component of this program, we provide an optional library skills/information literacy unit as an elective, guest lecturer session, and approximately one-third of the GT 1000 instructors select this alternative.

- **Freshmen Partners Program**

Expanding our commitment to undergraduate retention efforts, several librarians have also participated in the Freshmen Partners Program (2004 – 2005), a mentoring initiative designed to partner Georgia Tech faculty with groups of incoming freshmen. These partnerships have a major social component, as much

of the contact is during scheduled activities such as pizza parties, ice cream socials and recreational activities. However, it also provides an opportunity for freshmen to talk with and ask questions of faculty in informal, non-threatening settings.

Participation in GT 1000 and the Freshmen Partners Program has cultivated an enhanced sensitivity to the undergraduate experience in our public services division.

We needed to enhance the opportunities for professional development of both career staff and librarians.

The Information Services Department (ISD) regularly offers staff training workshops presented by subject specialists (both librarians and staff). These one-hour sessions on specific databases, print resources or subject areas are open to all staff and were developed as part of the ISD's 2003 Strategic Planning efforts. In 2003, ISD also instituted a competency-based system of training for new reference desk personnel and other Library staff interested in gaining customer

- Our Web Applications Developer is nationally recognized for his ground-breaking work on link resolving.
- A reference librarian is experimenting with marketing library services through social networking sites such as MySpace, Facebook, and student blogs and wikis to reach the millennial user of academic libraries.

We are now moving toward a culture that strives to meaningfully engage, value, and appropriately reward our staff.

Conclusion:

Through the years of providing services and resources to meet our mission, we found that we needed to incorporate the use of new technologies, internal and external collaborations, and student and faculty-focused initiatives to achieve successful outcomes. We use these successes as learning tools to foster continual improvement and change to better meet the needs of the scholarly community. We believe this evidence of our progress and continuing improvement represents a library of excellence.