information services and technology

IS&T

News about Information Services and technology throughout MIT

Volume 20 • Number 5 May / June 2005

Inside! Schedules of Hands-on Training Courses and Free Computer Events

Sloan Class Partners Students with IS&T Initiatives

• Lee Ridgway

Practical Information Technology Management (15.568) is an upper-level class in the Sloan School's undergrad program in management science. Taught by Cyrus Gibson, Senior Lecturer, the class gives substance to students' "book" learning through real-world initiatives. In addition to case discussions and executive visitors covering a range of topics in IT management, a project assignment represents a significant part of the course. Teams of students work with businesses or other organizations on projects – doing research, defining scope, gathering and analyzing information, and making recommendations.

In previous years, students worked with outside organizations. This year, Gibson decided to have them do an inside job, and focus on IT projects at MIT.

Gibson contacted Jerry Grochow, Vice President for Information Services and Technology (IS&T), and three teams were formed that were directly tied to three IS&T initiatives: expanding wireless to outdoor spaces; voice over IP; and an MIT administrative portal. Each team was matched with a champion from IS&T's Directors.

Outdoor Wireless

Janice Lin, Jessica So, Ashvini Thammaiah, and Harel Williams looked at expanding MITnet's wireless to outdoor areas of MIT. The champion for the team was Theresa Regan, Director of Operations & Infrastructure Services.

Among the motivating factors for this project are providing more seamless coverage across campus, and giving students additional locations for doing work online.

Research focused on gathering information about wireless technology trends and about outdoor implementations at other universities. Some considerations when planning for outdoor wireless are the size and landscape of the space, and what physical obstructions might get in the way of the signal. For covering a given area, up to three access points are optimal; more than three and interference is likely.

Outdoor wireless, by its nature, is more public: any passerby with a wireless computer can pick up the signal. What restrictions, if any, should be placed on that access? The universities queried fell into two camps:

- Have in place a system for guest registration, but restrict guests' access to the Internet (not the school's network).
- Require that all users of the school's wireless network be authenticated through a security mechanism such as passwords or certificates.

The outdoor wireless team proposed a short-term pilot, possibly by the end of summer, for three outdoor areas: the Stratton Student Center, the Stata Center, and within Killian Court.

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Sloan Class

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Voice over IP

John Cloutier and Jennifer Peng studied implementing Voice over Internet Protocol, or VoIP. The team's champion was Allison Dolan, Director of Telephony and Shared Services.

VoIP technology lets users make calls over the Internet instead of over regular phone lines. You connect to the Internet with a regular phone equipped with an adapter; with a special VoIP phone; or with a computer equipped with a microphone. You then make calls to regular telephone numbers. A touted feature of VoIP is that it may be free.

VoIP at MIT took on currency for Cloutier and Peng after the announcement that, beginning this fall, students in dorms would be charged to get local service on their dorm phones. Would VoIP offer an alternative?

The team's findings indicated the need to weigh VoIP's potential against the scale of implementation, supporting infrastructure, and cost of equipment. Human and business factors also come into play. So far, there's not a strong business model that makes VoIP advantageous, and most people still consider it more of a neat toy.

While MIT has some scattered use of VoIP, departments are not showing interest in it. Also, MIT's existing network infrastructure is insufficient to support VoIP. Still, the team recommended a small-scale installation to be tested by students in various dorms.

insideMIT: An Administrative Portal

Tiffany Kosolcharoen, Susie Lee, and Adam Powell investigated a customized portal to administrative and self-service applications, aimed primarily at MIT employees. The team's champion was Wayne Turner, former Director of Administrative Computing, and now in the Office of the Vice President for IS&T.

A portal web site, often for a defined audience, is the gateway to a host of resources and services, unrestricted as well as restricted. The plan behind insideMIT is to bring together functions in SAPweb Self-Service and SAPweb, as well as other resources that are important to employees (e.g., Parking, TechTime).

The insideMIT team collected information from three universities and the Sloan School on the development, rollout, ongoing support, and costs for their respective portals. From these, the team came up with recommendations for MIT. These include:

- Use SAP technology to develop the portal.
- Get community buy-in by emphasizing added value and minimal change, and address user concerns.
- Do a phased, incremental rollout rather than a "big bang" approach.
- Provide training.

Reactions and Next Steps

For all, the match of IS&T and 15.568 was positive and productive. Gibson said, "The students understood the context of their projects, and how their objectives related to MIT. They felt involved personally." Gibson also expressed appreciation for the extent to which IS&T worked with the students.

IS&T plans to take the results from the class to further the three initiatives. Jerry Grochow summed it up this way in responding to the teams' final presentations: "Your projects provide valuable information to MIT and IS&T. I was impressed by all aspects of your data gathering, analysis, and presentation. Some of what you ran up against – getting in contact with people, changes in scope and objectives, changes in team members – this is the real world. I know that you benefited from the experience and MIT will benefit from your results."

Time to Renew MIT Personal Certificates

Certificates are your key to secure web services at MIT – ECAT, Employee Self-Service, SAPweb, WebSIS, and many others. Personal certificates expire periodically, and renewal is not automatic. To get a new certificate that will last until July 31, 2006, go to

`http://web.mit.edu/ist/topics/certificates/`

and click on the link "Get MIT Personal Certificate." (Certificates obtained before June 2 will expire on July 31, 2005.)

You may have a more seamless experience renewing certificates if you do a little "housecleaning" up front: deleting old certificates before getting new ones. For instructions, see

`http://web.mit.edu/ist/topics/certificates/delete.html`

In addition, if you use certificates on multiple machines, you will need to get a new certificate for each machine.

Web Browser Recommendations

Before you renew your certificates, you may want to check to see that your web browser is up to date. IS&T develops browser recommendations to simplify support and ensure delivery of quality web services to the community. The current recommended web browsers, by platform, are:

- *Windows:* Internet Explorer 6 with Service Pack 1 (SP 1) or later. It is important, for security reasons, that you apply all critical operating system and web browser patches. For instructions on how to do this automatically, see `http://web.mit.edu/ist/topics/security/patch.html`
- *Macintosh:* Safari 1.2.2 or later for Mac OS X (10.3.4 or later).
- *Linux:* Firefox 1.0.4 or later, or Mozilla 1.6 or later.

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Acrobat 7 Professional Boosts Review Options and More

• Robyn Fizz

Adobe's Acrobat Professional 7 expands on the software's bedrock functionality: the ability to convert electronic files into the Portable Document Format (PDF), which maintains the look and feel of the original documents across platforms. Fonts, layout, images, and colors are preserved; the format even supports sound clips and movies.

Anyone can view and print PDF files using the free Adobe Reader. PDFs can also be sent as email attachments or viewed in web browsers.

Expanded Review Capabilities

The most compelling change in Acrobat 7 is greater flexibility in reviewing documents. Adobe Reader 7 users can now add comments to a draft document, as long as the process is initiated by an Acrobat 7 Professional user. This significantly broadens who can participate in the review process, whether it's conducted via email or web browsers.

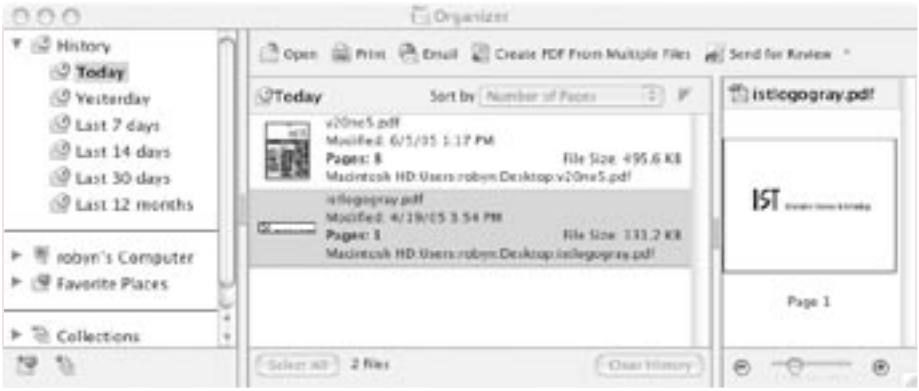
New commenting aids include the Callout tool and Dimensioning tool. The first lets reviewers create a text box with an arrow that can be adjusted to point to a specific part of the document. The text box expands so that the entire comment is viewable. The Dimensioning tool lets reviewers draw a line between two points, with a comment box above the line. This is especially useful for files with technical specifications.

The new Tracker window lets you monitor the status of all PDF files that you send and receive for review. You can also use the Tracker to subscribe to Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds and convert RSS items to PDF.

Other New Features

You may also want to check out these noteworthy Acrobat 7 features:

• *The Organizer window* lets you track recently opened PDFs and create and navigate collections of PDF documents. It offers various sort options – by modified date, file size, and the like. If you click on a document in the Organizer window, you can view thumbnails of that file's pages. The Organizer also makes it easy to create a single PDF from multiple files.



Acrobat 7's Organizer helps you find PDF files and organize them into collections.

• *Enhanced searching* lets you search attachments. (You could already search PDF files, bookmarks, and comments in Acrobat 6). Searching the Internet from within Acrobat 7 is powered by Yahoo! Search, and you can restrict these searches to PDFs only.

• The *Print Production toolbar* provides access to multiple functions, including preflighting, converting color spaces, flattening transparencies, and reducing file size.

• The *3D* tool lets you add content created in CAD or modeling programs.

• *Password protection* of PDF files is now an option. You can restrict users from opening, printing, or editing PDF files.

• *Accessibility issues* are addressed in a couple of ways. The *Accessibility Setup Assistant* lets users set options, such as high contrast for document text and the default display zoom. The *TouchUp Reading Order tool* lets authors correct page structure issues, so that screen reading software moves through a document in the intended order.

Differences by Platform

The Windows version of Acrobat 7 packs more punch than its Macintosh sibling. For starters, the Windows version offers better performance when launching the program and opening PDF files. It also comes bundled with LiveCycle Designer, an XML-based tool for creating interactive forms.

Windows users will also appreciate the ability to convert Outlook email messages or folders into PDF files.

More advanced security controls are available on Windows, but these require Adobe LiveCycle Policy Server, which is aimed at enterprises rather than workgroups.

Macintosh users still benefit from most of the new features in Acrobat 7. In addition, Adobe has enabled web browser-based viewing in Safari, including the ability to view comments and attachments.

Help from Adobe

Acrobat 7 provides documentation only through its Help menu. For tutorials on topics ranging from security to using the Organizer, go to

`http://www.adobe.com/products/tips/acrobat.html`

Support at MIT

Over a year ago, IS&T purchased a limited number of Acrobat 6 Professional licenses and maintenance, which means that a limited number of Acrobat 7 Professional licenses are now available for MIT faculty and staff. Details are still being worked out, but the first round of distribution will be coordinated through the software liaisons for departments, labs, and centers. According to the terms of the license agreement, IS&T needs to recoup any unused Acrobat 6 Professional licenses. For more information, see the Software Volume License Distribution page at

`http://web.mit.edu/is/products/vsls/`

Note: Community members can download the free Acrobat Reader from the MIT Software Distribution page at

`http://web.mit.edu/software/`

The Computing Help Desk supports Adobe Reader and the creation of PDF files using Acrobat, but does not have the resources to consult on Acrobat's advanced features, such as managing reviews or creating forms in Designer. You can reach the Help Desk at 253-1101 or <computing-help@mit.edu>.

Three Ways to Change Your Kerberos Password

• Jag Patel

IS&T recommends that members of the community practice good personal IT security by changing passwords regularly. IS&T recently released a web-based service to change Kerberos passwords. You can also change your Kerberos password via Athena or Kerberos software. All three options are detailed in this article and on the Changing Your Password page at

`http://web.mit.edu/accounts/www/password.html`

Kerberos passwords are used to access @mit.edu email accounts, create MIT web certificates, log into Athena or the win.mit.edu Windows Domain, and access such web services as TechTime.

When changing your password, be sure to select a strong, hard-to-guess password to replace it: for strategies, see the related article on page 5.

Change Password Using Browser

The web site at

`http://wserv.mit.edu/cpw`

lets you change your Kerberos password using your current password or your MIT Certificate. This web site also lets you set preferences on the parameters for changing your password online.

Change Password via Athena

To change your Kerberos password on an Athena machine, at the `athena%` prompt, type `passwd`. You will be asked for your old password and asked to type the new password twice. Your new password takes effect immediately.

Change Password Using Software

Windows and Macintosh users who have Kerberos installed on their computer can change their password using Kerberos for Windows or Kerberos for Macintosh. If you're running Eudora, this should already be installed. The steps are outlined below; the password change takes effect immediately.

Windows

1. From the Windows **Start** menu, choose **Run**, enter `leash32`, and click **OK**.

   Note: If you don't already have Kerberos tickets, go to Leash's **Action** menu, select **Get Ticket(s)/Token(s)**, enter your username and password, and click **OK**.
2. To change your password, click **Action>Change Password**, enter the required information in the fields, and click **OK**.

Macintosh

1. Open the **Utilities** folder inside your **Applications** folder. Double click on the Kerberos icon.

   Note: If you don't already have Kerberos tickets, click **Get Tickets...** and enter your username and password.
2. To change your password, click **Change Password...**, enter the required information in the fields, and click **OK**.

Getting Help

IS&T User Accounts provides support to MIT users who need to change passwords. You can reach Accounts by sending mail to <accounts@mit.edu>.

New Online Service for Creating MIT Mailing Lists

IS&T is testing a new service that lets MIT users create their own lists, including Mailman lists and Moira/Athena lists for email and access control. You can access the list creation web site from `http://web.mit.edu/accounts/www/list.html` (MIT certificates required).

Choosing a List Type

Mailman is a web-based list management system. Features include moderation of list traffic, archives of list messages, and flexible list subscription and filtering options.

Traditional Moira lists, also known as Athena mailing lists, can be used as simple mailing lists as well as access control lists in networked file systems, such as AFS or NFS. These lists do not offer moderation of list traffic.

If you have any questions about the type of list you need, or feedback about the new service, contact IS&T User Accounts at <accounts@mit.edu>.

This column presents announcements about IS&T-supported software. For more information about recent releases, see `http://web.mit.edu/swrt/`

Update on Mac OS X 10.4 ("Tiger")

Apple released Mac OS X 10.4 on April 29. As with any new operating system, especially one with as many changes under the hood as Mac OS X 10.4, there have been incompatibilities and bugs. About two weeks after its unveiling, Apple released Mac OS X 10.4.1, and more updates are likely.

Despite the usefulness of its new features – including Automator, Dashboard, Spotlight, and VoiceOver – Mac OS X 10.4 isn't ready yet for prime time at MIT. IS&T advises administrative users, especially those who depend on SAPgui 6.20, not upgrade to Mac OS X 10.4 at this time. Apple and SAP are working to address incompatibilities, but have not announced a time frame for a solution. In addition, there are compatibility issues between Mac OS X 10.4 and Virex, VPN, and Kerberos.

Until IS&T can recommend Mac OS X 10.4, support will be limited primarily to MIT community members who purchase Macintosh computers with Mac OS X 10.4 preinstalled.

To keep current with IS&T's plans regarding Mac OS X 10.4, visit the release notebook at

`http://web.mit.edu/swrt/releases/macosx10.4/`

IS&T Supports Apple Mail 1.3

Apple Mail 1.3.x is the email program that ships with the Macintosh OS X operating system. IS&T recently began supporting Apple Mail 1.3 or higher, running on Mac OS X 10.3 or higher.

IS&T recommends that Apple Mail be configured for use with MIT's IMAP email servers. Apple Mail works with Kerberos, MIT's network security authentication system, and can be configured for SMTP to securely authenticate your outbound email.

For more information, see the Apple Mail at MIT page at

`http://itinfo.mit.edu/product.php?vid=670`

If you need assistance with Apple Mail, contact the Computing Help Desk at <computing-help@mit.edu> or 253-1101.

Online Today, You Need a String of Strong Passwords

• Tim McGovern and Linda A. LeBlanc

It used to be you could use a single password (or one with a set of variations), because you accessed only a few resources online. But most users today have multiple email accounts, and also use passwords for online banking and shopping, and for accessing information sites like *The New York Times* and *Salon.com*. And the rules for creating passwords can vary from site to site. This proliferation of accounts and rules often leaves users in a quandary about how to manage their passwords.

The bottom line is that we all need to adopt savvy password strategies to minimize security risks, including identity theft. Creating strong passwords limits the likelihood that an intruder can guess yours. You need to strike a balance between strong passwords that are hard to guess and your ability to remember a password the next time you need it.

Key Advice

Because there's no guarantee that online transmissions are secure, it's important that you don't use the same password for multiple purposes. That way, if someone does intercept a password, the risk is limited to that account. For the same reason, passwords should not be too similar. Using the same word or acronym with different numbers as a suffix is not recommended. But you can create several unique passwords using a common theme. For example, you could construct passwords from acronyms of words in a quotation or other sentences that are meaningful to you.

It was once thought that changing your passwords often would eliminate risk. While it can keep you safer if you suspect that someone else has guessed or intercepted a password, changing passwords too frequently may increase the likelihood that you will run out of easily remembered passwords, which may lead you to write them down. That's not a good idea!

To help keep your passwords secure, follow this advice:

- Change the passwords for your most critical activities every six months
- Don't write down username and password pairs in the same place
- Don't share or send passwords to anyone

Tools for Organizing Passwords

There are tools today that can help with the problem of proliferating passwords. The Apple Macintosh OS X Keychain is an effective, built-in password storage utility. It works well, provided you never lose the computer's master password, which unlocks the Keychain. IS&T is evaluating commercial products for Windows: for updates, subscribe to the IT Security mailing list by sending mail to <security-fyi-request@mit.edu>.

Support

You can find more information on choosing strong passwords at

`http://web.mit.edu/ist/topics/network/passwords.html`

If you have questions about password or other IT security issues, send mail to the IT Security Support Team at <itss@mit.edu>.

Digital Talking Books Aid the Uncommon Reader

• Kathleen Cahill

Until recently, people who can't read books in print form had a great deal of difficulty locating books to read. Some users, especially those who are blind, visually impaired, or learning disabled, turned to books on tape. But for several reasons, books recorded onto cassette tape can be unwieldy to use. Depending on the number of cassettes, portability can be an issue. Audio quality can be marred by tape hiss. Users cannot bookmark, search, or index important points, nor skim or take notes within the book. Instead, listeners spend a lot of time rewinding and fast forwarding.

Blind and visually impaired people also have access to some books in electronic formats (e.g., Word or text files). The electronic version of the book can be read aloud by screen reader software, which converts text into synthesized speech. But the unnaturalness of a synthesized voice does not work for every reader. Also, many books are not available in electronic format.

The DAISY Standard

A consortium committed to improving access to books for those with print disabilities is seeing its efforts bear fruit. The Digital Accessible Information System (DAISY) Consortium was formed in 1996 as an international standards body by several national talking-book organizations.

People with different types of disabilities need different types of access to books. The DAISY standard allows for different renderings in audio format (human voice) as well as text. The audio and text versions of a book are marked up and synchronized so that users can search, navigate, and skim the book as a sighted user might. Some versions of the format also make it possible for a book to be generated in Braille.

Digital Talking Books (DTBs) are now available on CD through some talking-book libraries. To listen to these books, you need a DTB player. Many of these devices look like CD players and can also play MP3 files and audio CDs.

Recordings for the Blind and Dyslexic (RFB&D) uses an encrypted form of the DAISY standard called Audio Books Plus. Users of Audio Books Plus must have a DAISY player for this particular format. RFB&D has about 15,000 Audio Books Plus in its collection of 105,000 books. For more information, go to

`http://www.rfbd.org/`

The next proposed DAISY standard (DAISY 3) will be based on Extensible Markup Language (XML) and Synchronized Multimedia Integration Language (SMIL) rather than XHTML. This version will add more features to enhance the reading experience. For example, users with learning disabilities will be able to look at a text version of a book on the computer screen while listening to audio playback to enhance their comprehension.

To learn more about the DAISY standard, visit

`http://www.daisy.org/`

This column presents tips about computing. If you have a question you would like to see answered here, send it via email to <techtips@mit.edu>.

For more information technology Q&As, check the IS&T Stock Answers database at

`http://itinfo.mit.edu/answer/`

Q Where are my Apple Mail attachments stored?

A They are stored on the mail server and also cached on your computer with messages in your Inbox (INBOX.imapmbox). This is different from Eudora, which stores attachments in your Attachments folder, separate from the messages. Apple Mail's Inbox is stored in your home directory, in this location: **Library>Mail>IMAP***username* **@***yourmailserver***>INBOX.imapmbox** (where *username* is your username and *yourmailserver* is your mail server's hostname, such as po14.mit.edu).

If you've created subfolders on the IMAP mail server, their .imapmbox files can be found in the INBOX folder, in the same location as your INBOX.imapmbox file.

Q How can I download my Apple Mail attachments to save them indefinitely on my computer?

A You can save a single attachment by dragging its icon from the message to the desktop or to another location. If you'd like to save attachments from more than one message at a time, select the messages and then go to **File>Save Attachments**, select a download location, and choose **Save**.

Q How can I delete attachments without deleting the messages themselves?

A Select the messages in question, then go to **Message>Remove attachments**. This will create a duplicate copy of the message without attachments. The original message, including attachments, will be marked for deletion or moved to the trash mailbox, depending on your settings. Once you purge your messages or empty your trash, the attachments are not recoverable, unless you have backups of your cached .imapmbox files.

Q How do I set up spam filtering in Apple Mail?

A You'll need to create a Spamscreen folder. You can find instructions at

`http://web.mit.edu/ist/services/email/nospam/applemail.html`

If you've already created a Spamscreen folder in WebMail or another IMAP client, you don't need to create it again. You can read more about spam screening at MIT at

`http://web.mit.edu/ist/services/email/nospam/`

Q Apple Mail says it's unable to verify the identity of my mail server, even though I can still get my mail. Is there a way to get rid of this error message?

A You need to download and add the MIT Certicate Authority (MIT CA) to the system keychain called X509 Anchors. You can find instructions at

`http://itinfo.mit.edu/article.php?id=6667`

Interactive Kiosk in Lobby 7 Orients Visitors to MIT

• Suzana Lisanti

A sleek, brushed aluminum computer kiosk in Lobby 7 now provides information to campus visitors and members of the MIT community.

Visitors who arrive on weekdays from 9am to 5pm have access to a wealth of information, courtesy of the Information Center in Lobby 7. The challenge has been how to welcome visitors who come in the evenings and on weekends, when the Information Center is not staffed. The most pressing need expressed by off-hours visitors was a way to find a location on campus; secondly, the ability to find an event or contact information for individuals in the community. The kiosk also provides an opportunity to showcase the great things being done at MIT – for instance, visitors about to participate in the guided Information Tour can find out more about MIT while they wait.

Kiosk Services

The primary service of the kiosk is an interactive campus map, displayed on a large plasma screen. IS&T wrote a custom interface to the online map provided by the Department of Facilities. Included are walking directions to the most commonly asked for locations on campus, starting from Lobby 7.

This display has an automated screen saver that calls up photos and videos of MIT activities. A touch on the keyboard or trackball triggers a switch from these images to the campus map.

To the right of the map screen is a public-access computer where people can browse MIT web sites and related services, including the online directory to look up people and offices. A third screen is dedicated to the day's events.

The kiosk is accessible to wheelchair users, and has two bins with printed copies of the campus map.

Heads-up Orientation

The kiosk is placed on the north side of Lobby 7, where visitors can consult it without being in the flow of the main traffic on the Infinite Corridor. This placement incorporates what cartographers call "heads-up" display: information on the map can be found following the direction a person's head points while standing in front of the map.

Feedback

If you have comments or suggestions about the new interactive kiosk, send them to <kiosk7@mit.edu>.

SAP Plant Maintenance Module Helps Facilities Do Its Job

• Diana Hughes

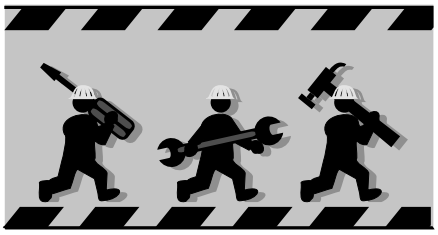
The SAP Plant Maintenance system automates the processing of non-scheduled repair requests and scheduled preventative maintenance requests for MIT buildings and equipment. Community members can submit repair requests via the Building Repair tab in SAPweb at

`http://web.mit.edu/sapweb/`

The requests are recorded in SAP, where they are routed to the appropriate team (e.g., carpentry, electrical, plumbing). Next, the work orders are scheduled, materials are planned, labor is recorded, and costs are settled monthly. Basic repair services are available for lighting fixtures, shades and windows, blackboards, doors, elevators, floors, and ceilings. Preventive maintenance includes the planning and scheduling of maintenance for 7000 pieces of equipment, including any special instructions for performing the upkeep.

The Transition to SAP

In early 2003, the Department of Facilities was prepared to enhance its legacy system, Maximo, and create an accounting interface to SAP. A collaborative partnership was formed between Facilities and Information Services and Technology (IS&T) to evaluate whether



SAP Plant Maintenance could address Facilities' requirements. In December 2003, the Plant Maintenance Discovery Team delivered a business case to recommend the phased implementation of SAP Plant Maintenance. In July 2004, Phase I launched when SAP replaced Maximo for the processing of repair and preventative maintenance orders.

IS&T, in partnership with Facilities, recently completed Phase II of the SAP Plant Maintenance implementation. In February and March, respectively, the Department of Housing and the Facilities Central Utilities Plant (CUP) were integrated into SAP Plant Maintenance. The Department of Housing includes sixteen student dormitories. Before this, both Housing and the Facilities CUP processed all requests in Maximo. The Phase II implementation includes the submission, management, and planning of work orders, cataloging and processing of preventive maintenance plans, and confirmation of workers' time.

Benefits

The SAP Plant Maintenance module provides many benefits to MIT:

- Online entry point for all requests to Facilities;
- Integration of all aspects of plant maintenance processes, including planning, materials, labor reporting, and accounting in real time;
- Ability to plan materials and track costs at a lower level of detail (i.e., work order and equipment);
- Easy access to data to make decisions about repairing or replacing equipment;
- Laying the foundation for integration efforts with the Environmental, Health, and Safety system;
- Elimination of development and support for the Maximo system.

Proposed future implementations include Custodial and Grounds Services and Vehicle Maintenance.

Check Hardware Guidelines for Up-to-Date Recommendations

• Ginny Williams

Are you wondering if the computer on your desk should be replaced, or if the one you want to buy has enough power to last you for the next few years? IS&T has posted a new set of general guidelines to help you decide, including minimum configurations to compare with computers you already own, as well as recommended configurations that can guide you if you plan to buy one in the near future. You can find the guidelines at

`http://web.mit.edu/ist/topics/hardware/guidelines.html`

If your department participates in the AdminIT Preventative Maintenance Program or the Desktop Renewal Program, then the recommendations are a bit different. For details, see the hardware and software standards linked off of the AdminIT page at

`http://web.mit.edu/ist/services/hardware/adminit/`

Minimum and Recommended

If you're going to buy a new computer, IS&T recommends that you get at least 512MB of RAM, a CD read/write drive and DVD reader, and a 40GB hard drive. Laptops should have 802.11 b/g wireless Ethernet cards in addition to built-in Ethernet.

Don't forget to have a good backup strategy, install virus software, and check regularly for updates and patches to your operating system and applications. Members of the MIT community can download free copies of McAfee VirusScan (or Virex for Macs) and other security and utility software at

`http://web.mit.edu/software/`

IS&T has worked with Apple, Dell, Hewlett-Packard (HP), and IBM/Lenovo to identify computers that meet the recommended specifications and fit them into categories, based on intended use, such as entry-level, mid-range, and power configurations. IS&T has also added a category for ultra-light laptops, since they are gaining in popularity. HP laptops are available in a dual-boot configuration, with Windows XP and Red Hat Linux. IS&T has also listed two HP tablets this year, one slate and one convertible.

Presales Advice

Many laptops from the vendors listed above are on display in the lobby of N42 at 211 Massachusetts Avenue. Stop by to pick up a flyer, test out a machine, or get help with your purchase. For vendor information and more, visit the Computer Buying Advice page at

`http://web.mit.edu/ist/services/hardware/presales.html`

Getting Help

If you don't know where to get help for your computer, network, or telephone problems, dial one of the help lines listed to the right.

If you prefer to use e-mail, you can send your questions to the corresponding e-mail addresses on the far right. (When logged into Athena, you can also use the `olc` command to send questions to Athena's online consultants.)

You can also submit a question online via Casetracker at

`http://casetracker.mit.edu/`

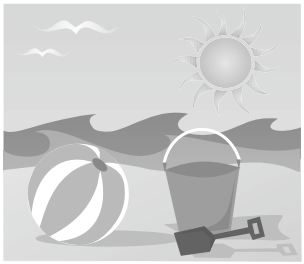
For help with...	Dial...	Or send a message to...
General computing questions Macintosh, Windows, network/ connectivity, business applications, computer buying advice	253-1101	computing-help@mit.edu
Academic computing	253-0115	f_l@mit.edu
Athena Computing Environment	253-4435	olc@mit.edu
Computer and printer repairs	253-0815	pcservice@mit.edu
Disabilities and computing	253-7808	atic@mit.edu
Telephone and voice mail services	253-3670	telecom-csr@mit.edu
Telephone repairs	253-4357	3help@mit.edu
Unix/Linux	253-1103	unix-linux-help@mit.edu

Surf Sites: Summer Fun

Now that summer is here, it's time to explore the beaches, waterways, gardens, and other glories of New England. Let the links to the right inspire some fair weather outings!

And don't forget to check out happenings right here on campus, courtesy of the MIT Events Calendar at

`http://events.mit.edu/`



Best of New England Waterfalls
`http://www.newenglandwaterfalls.com/bestofnewengland.php`

BSO / Tanglewood
`http://www.bso.org/`

Gardens to Visit: New England
`http://www.bestgardening.com/bgc/gardenopen/usnewengland.htm`

Guide to New England Beaches
`http://www.boston.com/travel/newengland/beaches/`

Hiking New England's Mountains
`http://www.mountainsummits.com/`

Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation
`http://www.mass.gov/dcr/`

New England Fairs and Festivals
`http://www.boston.com/travel/newengland/festivals/`

New England Nature Links
`http://www.naturecompass.org/naturelinks/`

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