

IS&T

MIT

News about Information Services and Technology throughout MIT

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

MIT Libraries Offers News Blog and RSS Feeds, Also RefWorks **2**

Software Spotlight

IS&T Supports Red Hat Enterprise Linux 4 **3**

Network Notes

MIT WebMail Service Upgraded to More Robust Version **4**

Bits and Bytes **4**

Safe Computing

What the MGM v. Grokster Case Means for MIT and You **5**

Telecom Talk

MIT Negotiates Agreement with MobileSphere for CellularLD **5**

Tech Tips: MIT WebMail **6**

Order Life Science Supplies via the New Sciqwest Catalog **6**

IS&T Customer Survey 2005: The Only Constant Is Change **7**

IS&T and SSIT Join Forces! **7**

Getting Help **8**

Surf Sites: Robot Central **8**

Hello, My Name Is MERTZ: Can a Robot Learn Like a Baby?

• Robyn Fizz

Doctoral student Lijin Aryananda's path to robotics began with an MIT undergraduate class in Embodied Intelligence. Something clicked, and now, as a member of CSAIL's Humanoid Robotics Group, Aryananda has developed a robot – or rather, a robot head – of her own.



MERTZ is an “active-vision” robot head mounted on a portable platform. It has two digital firewire cameras for eyes and a voice array microphone to capture what people say to it. Visually, MERTZ can detect skin, saturated color, motion, and faces. Its audio system consists of a phoneme recognizer and a speech synthesizer. Behind the scenes, there is no wall of data-crunching super-computers. Instead MERTZ travels with three customized computers and various embedded systems that can function without human intervention.

MERTZ's mechanical design is the work of Jeff Weber, a research engineer in CSAIL. He and Aryananda first built a working prototype, based on desired dimensions and movement. Drawing on past experience, Weber opted for a hollow tube for the neck to house all of the cables. The design

is also very modular, so parts can be replaced easily.

Up close and personal, MERTZ has the innocent look of a small child. Aryananda wanted a face that was cute and friendly, not alien, because MERTZ is meant to interact with and learn from others. MERTZ's seeming simplicity is echoed in the basic construction materials of its face: the faceplate is a placid light gray plastic; its eyes are spray-painted balls from a pet shop; and its lips are made from movable springs.

Even MERTZ's voice is childlike. Aryananda's instinct is that people expect less intelligence if a robot seems like a child – and for now, MERTZ's intelligence is very primitive.

Words and Faces

MERTZ has been built to explore “socially situated learning” – that is, to acquire new behavior from others in a social context, much as human infants do. MERTZ recently made its debut, spending five days in public spaces in the Stata Center. Through signage, MERTZ invited people to interact with it. The robot head tries to mimic what people say to it, and also collects face images and voice samples for its developing memory.

During this trial run, MERTZ collected over 100,000 face images of at least 600 individuals. Although the data from MERTZ's debut was too “noisy” to be very useful, the speech data did show that people spoke at a higher pitch to MERTZ than to each

continued on page 2 ▶

▼ MERTZ

continued from page 1

other, indicating that they perceive it as having childlike qualities.

Now that MERTZ is up and running, Aryananda is focused on teaching it word learning and face recognition. There are already robots that can do these tasks, but only in very circumscribed conditions. For example, given concurrent speech and visual input, robots can learn words, but only when the object – such as a cup – is clearly segmented from its environment and the word “cup” is spoken by the same person repeatedly.

A third, even more complex goal is to find the most general solution to a model for learning – with a minimum of constraints. Aryananda wants her robot to be able to function in many environments, just as humans do, and to learn from a stream of inputs. So far, this kind of robustness in robots has been hard to come by.

Beyond Brittle

How do you create a robot that can learn for hours at a time without supervision, in locations with different sound and light conditions? Aryananda and Weber have tried to incorporate fault

prevention strategies into MERTZ’s mechanical design. This isn’t to say they’ve worked out all the kinks – MERTZ’s gaze can still be drawn away from a face – confused by the light from a nearby window or some other bright object.

But since MERTZ is not based on highly specialized algorithms, it may ultimately be able to function in a wider range of settings than other robots. In line with this notion of flexibility, Aryananda intends for MERTZ to be a “creature” that is on every day and that can carry over things that it’s learned. One example might be recognition of individuals: when MERTZ sees a person more than once, can it learn to

What’s in a Name?

The name MERTZ has humorous origins. Kathleen Richardson, an anthropologist from the University of Cambridge in England who was studying the CSAIL roboticists, had been trying to become more conversant with their technical terms. At one point she said, “Oh, you and your jigamertz” when she meant to say “megahertz.” The roboticists liked her new word and decided that Jigamertz, or just MERTZ, would make a good name for Aryananda’s robot.

say the person’s name or remember the words that person taught it?

The next phase, controlled experiments with humans, may begin to answer some of these questions. For now, though, Aryananda can’t predict where on the “generality” curve MERTZ’s learning will occur.

The Big Question

Aryananda admits that MERTZ may not provide the answer to the big question that motivates her: Can a robot *ever* learn how to do something new on its own, or will it always be limited to what it’s been programmed to do or learn? If a robot could take something it’s learned from one person and use that knowledge to surprise someone else – much like a baby – that would be a big leap. Whether or not this will come to pass one day is still an open question.

More About MERTZ

For photos and videos of MERTZ, as well as a schedule of its upcoming appearances, go to

<http://people.csail.mit.edu/lijin/>

The Humanoid Robotics Group is part of the Living Breathing Robots initiative, led by CSAIL Director Rodney Brooks. To learn more about Living Breathing Robots, go to

<http://groups.csail.mit.edu/lbr/>

MIT Libraries Offers News Blog and RSS Feeds, Also RefWorks

Want to be the first to learn about new music and iPods available in the Music Library? Discover the hottest summer reads in the Humanities Library? Or find out about an upcoming book sale or class? To get the latest news from the MIT Libraries, bookmark the blog at

<http://news-libraries.mit.edu/>

or subscribe to the Libraries’ RSS news feeds by starting at

<http://news-libraries.mit.edu/blog/rss-feeds>

The Libraries recently launched the blog and RSS feeds to keep the MIT community up to date on library resources, events, classes, and more. The blog provides news from all nine libraries and the Institute Archives. Using your news reader, you can specify whether you would like to receive all the news stories posted to the blog, or just those related to your area of interest – science, engineering, music, events, and so on.

RefWorks Bibliographic Software

One recent item in the Libraries’ blog concerns RefWorks, a web-based resource for organizing references and creating bibliographies. RefWorks makes it easier to write papers as well as post results to web pages by allowing faculty, students, and staff to search, retrieve relevant citations, and build bibliographies.


The MIT Libraries sponsors a site license for RefWorks.

Anyone with an Athena account can create and maintain RefWorks accounts – for individual or group use. RefWorks is available on or off campus at

<http://libraries.mit.edu/get/refworks>

For full details, see the RefWorks at MIT page at

<http://libraries.mit.edu/help/refworks/>



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IS&T Supports Red Hat Enterprise Linux 4

• Bill Cattey

Recently, Red Hat released Red Hat Enterprise Linux 4 (RHEL 4), the successor to RHEL 3. IS&T fully supports this new version, along with the Red Hat Network update service. RHEL 4 has many new features and supports more recent hardware than RHEL 3. Red Hat has posted a hardware compatibility list at

<http://bugzilla.redhat.com/hwcert/>

What's New?

RHEL 4 offers several technology enhancements while maintaining a high level of compatibility with prior releases. New features include the following.

- The latest kernel, version 2.6, enhances security, performance, and functionality. These benefits, however, have made it more difficult to port OpenAFS.
- Support for Security Enhanced Linux (SELinux) has been incorporated. IS&T currently recommends leaving the SELinux features turned off until it has had time to fully test them. However, IS&T expects that, with time, SELinux will be used widely.
- Conformance with the Standardized Application Binary Interface (ABI) is now in place. This will require more applications to be recompiled initially, but once ABI is fully implemented and adopted, applications should run regardless of which Linux distribution you use.

For a complete list of new features, see the RHEL 4 release notes at

<http://www.redhat.com/software/rhel/notes/>

Application Updates

Both Red Hat and IS&T have made related updates to a variety of Linux applications.

From Red Hat

- Open Office has been updated to version 1.3.
- The Evolution email client and other GNOME-based applications have added functionality and comply with version 2.8 of the GNOME toolkit.

- The web browser has changed from Mozilla to Firefox, for improved performance and functionality. IS&T has made Firefox the default in the new Athena release as well.



From IS&T

- Acrobat Reader has been updated to version 7.
- IS&T now supports and offers for download Linux Pine, the email program based on the Athena-supported Pine client.
- Updated binaries are available for the Zephyr instant messaging system and the Kerberized LPRng printing system.

More Liberal Licensing

Previously MIT was licensed only for the RHEL AS and WS products, with the restriction that personally owned systems could only run WS. MIT now has a broader site license that lets community members run all four RHEL products – AS, ES, WS, and Desktop – without restrictions on what can run on personal systems. As a practical matter, IS&T fully supports and recommends AS and WS, while offering only best-effort support for ES and Desktop.

Note: For a brief description of the products, see the overview at http://www.redhat.com/whitepapers/rhel/INS0002US_RHEL_collateral.pdf

Known Issues

You can ease the transition from RHEL 3 to RHEL 4 by being aware of a few known issues.

- *Confusing Red Hat Network registration prompts.* When you first install RHEL 4, you're asked to register for the Red Hat Network update service. If you say 'yes,' you are sent to the for-pay Red Hat server rather than the MIT server that is free to community members. If you say 'no,' you get periodic pop-ups asking you to do so. The MIT Red Hat Network registration system silences the reminders. Say 'no' and register with the MIT server by following the instructions at

<http://web.mit.edu/ist/topics/linux/rhn.html>

- *Delays porting OpenAFS.* Porting and validating OpenAFS for the 2.6 kernel and RHEL 4 has taken longer than planned. IS&T expects to fully support OpenAFS in a matter of weeks. If you need AFS, stay with RHEL 3 for now.
- *Long upgrade time and potential data loss.* Upgrading from RHEL 3 to RHEL 4 takes roughly three hours for a 1GHz system – as opposed to about 20 minutes for a reinstall. The upgrade script will destroy local data if you try to switch OS products, for example from WS to AS, as part of the upgrade.
- *Need to update MIT applications.* When you migrate from RHEL 3 to RHEL 4, you will need to update your MIT applications because new binaries are required for RHEL 4. You may also need to refresh your Kerberos configuration because the Red Hat Kerberos update may overwrite the MIT configuration.

A detailed list of known issues and resolutions can be found at

<http://itinfo.mit.edu/article?id=7763>

How to Obtain RHEL 4

Existing RHEL 3 users can update to RHEL 4 using Red Hat Network, following the procedure documented at

<http://itinfo.mit.edu/article?id=7792>

ISO images of the RHEL 4 CDs are available (MIT certificates required) at <https://web.mit.edu/rhlinux/rhel-4.0/>

To obtain a copy of the Red Hat Enterprise Linux CD set (MIT certificates required), go to

<https://web.mit.edu/ist/products/vsls/mitlinux/>

Getting Help

The Red Hat Enterprise at MIT page is located at

<http://itinfo.mit.edu/product?vid=671>

If you need assistance with RHEL 4, contact the Computing Help Desk at <computing-help@mit.edu> or 253-1101. ☛



MIT WebMail Service Upgraded to More Robust Version

• Heather Anne Harrison

In July, the MIT WebMail service was upgraded to IMP (Internet Messaging Program) 4. This new version of the software, from the vendor Horde, offers several features that have been commonly requested by the MIT community, including

- Better notification of session timeouts to prevent loss of composed mail
- More attachment handling and viewing features
- Address book functionality to save contact information across sessions

This upgrade, combined with the recent email quota increase to 500MB, translates into a more robust WebMail solution for the community.

You can access the improved MIT WebMail at

<http://webmail.mit.edu/>

New Features

MIT's WebMail upgrade includes the following features.

- *Inbox.* Messages sent to your email address – as opposed to those sent to you as a member of a mailing list – are highlighted with a Personal icon.
- *Compose.* The compose window opens a dialog box to indicate when your session is five minutes from expiring, prompting you to reload the page to prevent losing your work. A similar message displays when the session is one minute from expiring. In addition, WebMail now supports HTML message composition.
- *Address book.* By selecting the Address Book icon in the gray toolbar, you can add, edit, and import contacts from other applications such as Outlook. From the compose screen, you can choose mail recipients from the address book or use aliases.



- *Attachments.* More types of attachments can be displayed and attachment viewers have been upgraded to improve performance. New options let you preview at-

tachments in the compose window; choose not save attachments with sent mail; forward multiple attachments at one time; send attachments as links; remove individual attachments from messages; and download multiple attachments in one Zip file.

- *Allowlist and Denylist options.* In the message view and mailbox listing, you can add addresses to your Denylist and Allowlist filters using the new Denylist and Allowlist options. Allowlist is for trusted addresses that you will always accept mail from. Denylist is for addresses you never want mail from. Messages from denylisted users will be automatically deleted and you will never see them.
- *Folders.* Virtual folders let you save the results of a search for later use. Deleting a virtual folder does not delete the messages listed in that folder.
- *Deleting and moving messages.* WebMail displays the next message after deleting, moving, or copying a message by default. Through Message Options, users can now set their own preferences for what happens when they delete or move messages.
- *Threaded messages.* In the message view, you now have the option to View Thread. Selecting this option displays all the messages in an e-mail conversation (the originating messages and all subsequent replies) on one screen. Messages sent separately (not via the reply feature or with a new subject) are not listed in the threaded view.
- *Navigation.* In the mailbox and message view, you can now use the forward and backward arrow keys as a shortcut to navigate through pages of messages. It's the equivalent of clicking the arrow icons to navigate to the next or previous page.

Support

WebMail provides a list of help topics through the Help icon on the gray toolbar.

If you have questions about WebMail, contact the Computing Help Desk at computing-help@mit.edu or 253-1101. ☎



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

IS&T Releases Eudora 6.2.3 for Windows and Macintosh

IS&T has released Eudora 6.2.3, but recommends that current Eudora users transition to the email client that's bundled with their operating system (i.e., Outlook Express or Apple Mail). IS&T also recommends Outlook 2003, which is bundled with Office 2003 Professional for Windows. For more information on Office 2003, see

<http://itinfo.mit.edu/product.php?vid=613>

Note: Windows users who plan to continue using Eudora should upgrade to 6.2.3 as soon as possible to obtain critical security enhancements.

For information on new features and known issues, read the Eudora 6.2.3 release announcement at

<http://web.mit.edu/swrt/releases/eudora/eudora-6-2-3-ra.html>

For documentation, and to download the software, see the Eudora 6.2.3 at MIT page for your operating system:

Windows

<http://itinfo.mit.edu/product.php?vid=682>

Macintosh

<http://itinfo.mit.edu/product.php?vid=662>

Release efforts for both Apple Mail and Outlook Express are under way; IS&T expects to offer full support by the end of August. If you have questions about either client, send mail to mail-release@mit.edu or outlook-release@mit.edu, respectively. For assistance with Eudora 6.2.3, contact the Computing Help Desk at 253-1101 or computing-help@mit.edu.

Support for VPN for Mac OS X

Version 4.6.04 of Cisco's Virtual Private Network (VPN) client for Mac OS X is now available. The major change is Mac OS X 10.4 ("Tiger") compatibility for single- and dual-processor Macintoshes.

To learn more, go to the VPN 4.6 for Macintosh page at

<http://itinfo.mit.edu/product.php?vid=648> ☎



What the MGM v. Grokster Case Means for MIT and You

• Mark Van Dyke

You've probably heard about the outcome of the "MGM v. Grokster and StreamCast Networks" case. MGM sued the self-proclaimed "next Napster" and others for intentionally promoting illegal file sharing. On June 27, 2005, the Supreme Court ruled, by unanimous decision, that those providing software created for the purpose of sharing copyrighted materials – including music, movies, and software – may be held liable for any infringement that takes place using the software. The case was then sent back to a lower federal court to determine whether there was clear intent or encouragement by the defendants for illegal use of their software.

While some see this decision as a major blow to distributors of peer-to-peer (P2P) software, the courts still need to rule on whether Grokster and others named in the lawsuit showed true intent that their software was to be used for illegal file sharing. Since there are plenty of legal uses of P2P

technology, it is probable the software will continue to be available.



Legal Action

Meanwhile, individuals who illegally download or share copyrighted materials continue to be at risk of legal action. Copyright holders have sent an increasing number of Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) takedown notices to Internet Service Providers (ISPs) – including MIT – regarding alleged infringements. Upon notice from a copyright holder, it is MIT's practice to send the takedown notice to the owner of the machine or to the person registered for the IP address in the takedown notice, and to ask the individual to remove all infringing materials.

As early as 2003, MIT and other academic institutions and ISPs began to receive subpoenas in addition to takedown notices. (More recently, MIT has also received pre-subpoena notices that provide prior notice of intention to serve a subpoena for IP address identifying information.) The subpoenas require MIT to disclose the identities of individuals associated with IP addresses

where copyright infringement has been alleged. MIT complies with the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act by giving students notice and a copy of the subpoena prior to any response.

For full details on MIT's policy on copyright infringement, see <http://web.mit.edu/ist/stopit/>

How to Protect Yourself

What can you do to protect yourself from being sued by media owners? The answer is obvious: don't share copyright-protected materials. Most P2P applications create and use a shared folder on each host. This is the repository for everything you download or intend to share with others. The simplest solution is to make sure that no copyrighted materials that you don't have authorization to distribute end up in this folder. In short, don't download anything without authorization and, if you rip your CDs to your computer, don't keep your music in a publicly accessible folder.

For more about copyright at MIT, including relevant contact information, see <http://web.mit.edu/ist/topics/security/copyright/>



MIT Negotiates Agreement with MobileSphere for CellularLD

• Joni Cyr and Lee Ridgway

MIT has negotiated an agreement with MobileSphere CellularLD to provide reduced international wireless long-distance calling rates for MIT students and staff when calling from their registered cellular phones.

Rates and Terms

CellularLD has an extensive list of local access numbers so that customers can access the CellularLD network locally and pay a lower rate. A local Boston area access number is provided to MIT customers upon registration.

If you are somewhere in the U.S. that doesn't have a local access number, you can use CellularLD's toll-free access number. Note that you will

pay a higher rate if you access the CellularLD network via the toll-free number.

For the CellularLD rate schedule, including the per-minute rates for local versus toll-free access, see

http://www.cellularld.com/u/check_rates.php

These rates include all applicable taxes. There are no monthly charges, connection fees, or other surcharges.

CellularLD services are provided on a prepaid basis only, and are available only for calls originated in the U.S. The service cannot be used for calls initiated from international locations.

Keep in Mind

CellularLD international service does not replace your regular cellular plan. CellularLD provides lower international long-distance rates than what you would be charged by your cellular

carrier. Your monthly allotment of cellular plan minutes will still be used when making international calls with CellularLD.



Although you can use CellularLD to make domestic calls, most cellular plans include local and domestic long-distance calls in the monthly rate. IS&T advises that you not use the CellularLD service to make calls within the U.S., as you will be charged a per-minute rate for the call in addition to using your monthly plan minutes.

Details and Signup

To learn more about MobileSphere's CellularLD, including how to sign up for the service, go to

<http://web.mit.edu/ist/tel/cellularld.html>



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 In WebMail, how do I save a copy of all my sent messages?

A On the gray toolbar, click the **Options** icon. Select **Personal Information**, and then an identity from the **Select the identity you want to change** pull-down menu. If you haven't created any identities, choose **Default Identity**. Select the **Save sent mail?** check box and a **Sent mail folder** from the pull-down menu. You may also enter other personal options, such as a signature, on this screen. Click **Save Options** to apply your changes.

Q How do I configure WebMail to automatically check my spelling before I send a message?

A On the gray toolbar, click the **Options** icon. Select **Message Composition**, then the **Check spelling before sending a message?** check box. Click **Save Options** to apply your changes.

Q How can I configure WebMail to notify me when I have new mail?

A From the gray toolbar, click the **Options** icon. Select **New Mail**, then the **Display pop-up notification of new mail?** check box. Choose an interval other than **Never** from the **Refresh Folder Views** menu. Click **Save Options** to apply your changes.

Q How do I add an address book entry?

A On the gray toolbar, click the **Address Book** icon. Then click the **Add** icon on the toolbar. Enter the information you'd like to include in your entry, and click **Save**.

Q How do I edit an entry in my personal address book?

A From the gray toolbar, click the **Address Book** icon, and then either **Browse** or **Search** to locate the entry to be edited. Click the **Edit** icon (a piece of paper with a pencil, immediately to the right of the check box). Make the desired changes and click **Save**. If you change your mind before saving, you can click **Undo Changes** to revert to the last saved version. Entries in the MIT Directory lookup can't be edited.

Q When I do an address book search, it searches the MIT Directory, rather than my personal address book. How can I change the default?

A On the gray toolbar, click the **Address Book** icon. Select **Searching Options**, then **My Addressbook** from the **Default directory for your personal address book, contact lists and searches** pull-down menu. Click on **Save Options** to apply your changes. ☛

Order Life Science Supplies via the New SciQuest Catalog

• Lorraine Rappaport

M IT requisitioners can now access a variety of life science and maintenance, repair, and operations (MRO) vendors via the new SciQuest ECAT catalog at

<http://web.mit.edu/ecat/sciquest/>

This "one-stop" catalog lets requisitioners browse for, compare, and order products from a range of suppliers. The current list includes Sigma-Aldrich, Qiagen, Invitrogen, GE Healthcare Biosciences (formerly Amersham), USA Scientific, Perkin Elmer, and Newark InOne. More suppliers will be added over the next several months, with the goal of making 30 to 50 vendors available through this one gateway.

Supply Side

Suppliers are enabled as either "punchout" or "hosted." Punchout suppliers host their catalogs on their own web sites that are linked from the SciQuest catalog. When users select a punchout supplier, they are transferred



to the supplier's web site to search for and select products. When users "check out" from a supplier's punchout shopping cart, the selected items

populate a cart on the SciQuest site, where users may then continue with the order. The features and "look and feel" of punchout catalogs vary from vendor to vendor. Some punchout catalogs offer the advantage of up-to-date inventories, the ability to configure products, additional product information, and other supplier-specific features.

Hosted suppliers upload their catalogs data directly to the SciQuest catalog and provide periodic updates to products and pricing. Hosted catalogs offer a consistent "look and feel" and the ability to search across multiple supplier catalogs and conduct side-by-side product comparisons. Users may create "favorites" lists to quickly find their frequently ordered items.

Carts Before POs

Users can create multiple draft shopping carts. However, a single cart must contain items from only one supplier.

Carts must be "checked out" to SAP-web and web requisitions must be submitted to SAP individually. Radioactive materials are available from several vendors on the SciQuest site, but need to go through the appropriate MIT approvals. IS&T has worked with the Procurement and Environment, Health, and Safety offices to establish an automated approval process for radioactive materials.

Purchase orders (POs), generated from shopping carts created in the SciQuest catalog, are sent electronically to SciQuest and then on to the suppliers. There is no need to call a supplier with your order information. Some suppliers will send email confirmations once they receive and process an order.

Initially, suppliers will continue to send paper invoices, which must be reviewed and approved by the departments, labs, and centers. In the fall, Procurement and IS&T will begin working with selected suppliers to implement electronic invoicing, similar to that offered by other ECAT vendors.

For more information, go to the SciQuest web site or send your inquiries to <sciquest@mit.edu>. ☛

IS&T Customer Survey 2005: The Only Constant Is Change

• Brian McDonald

As part of a continuing effort to provide the best possible information technology services to the MIT community, IS&T and other MIT IT providers conducted their latest customer satisfaction survey in April 2005. These surveys, run about every eighteen months since 2001, have proven to be important tools for documenting customer satisfaction and discontent, and for prioritizing initiatives to improve services. The results are taken seriously by IS&T leadership. For example, as a result of the survey in 2003 and other feedback from the community, IS&T

- Renewed emphasis on completing the expansion of wireless coverage.
- Added Microsoft Outlook to the list of supported email clients; the Oracle Connector for Outlook was also added to the suite of supported applications.
- Joined the Microsoft Select Licensing program, bringing Microsoft products to the MIT community at a fraction of already steeply discounted academic pricing.
- Deployed an additional WebMail server to increase performance.

- Sponsored an “Expectation Levels” project, in which IS&T revamped the “Supported/Unsupported” classification of software – opting for a freer and more complete representation of the level of knowledge IS&T can offer on various software products.
- Developed a more comprehensive automated application for Windows updates.

Areas Showing Improvement

Many of these efforts have paid off. Since the 2003 survey, ratings for wireless availability jumped from 3.99 to 4.50 (on a 6-point scale). This gain is especially laudable given that client expectations for this service have been rising. Gains were also made in clients’ satisfaction with their ability to access MIT services while traveling, rising from 4.26 to 4.54. Another area with a higher rating was network jack installations and activations. The timeliness rating of jack installations and activations moved from 4.20 to 4.78.

Areas in Need of Improvement

Many of the areas that people expressed the most dissatisfaction with were related to computing “on the run.” WebMail, for example, accounted for three of the ten highest levels of dissatisfaction. Shared calendaring also had high levels of dissatisfaction.

Spam screening continues to be marked by dissatisfaction, despite an improved version of this service that was released in November 2003.

Once thought of as a mature product, telephone services saw ratings decline, possibly due to unfavorable comparisons with the range of newer products and services becoming common outside of MIT.

Rated as Most Important

This year’s survey included questions about the importance of certain services and possible service enhancements. Rising to the top were

1. Automated software security and virus patch upgrades
2. Better spam filtering
3. Better web-based self-help

Interestingly, the Windows Automated Update Service received one of the highest satisfaction ratings, but it appears that less than half of the community has taken advantage of it.

Moving Forward

IS&T has begun to address key concerns and to plan for services that are in high demand. Check the *is&t* newsletter and the IS&T web site for details on new and improved offerings.

To view the survey results, start at <http://web.mit.edu/ist/survey/2005/>

IS&T and SSIT Join Forces!

• Christine Fitzgerald and the IS&T/SSIT Transition Team

On July 1, Student Services Information Technology (SSIT) joined forces with Information Services and Technology’s Administrative Computing Department. Working together under the IS&T umbrella, SSIT and Administrative Computing will be better positioned to serve MIT in the development and maintenance of student and administrative enterprise systems.

The Driving Forces

Last year, Bob Redwine, the Dean for Undergraduate Education (DUE), formed an SSIT Advisory Committee, chaired by Professor Kim Vandiver. The committee was charged with

- Assessing SSIT’s ability to satisfy current and anticipated demands;
- Recommending organizational changes or capabilities to optimize the effectiveness of SSIT’s mission;

- Recommending qualifications for an SSIT Director.

The committee identified a need for substantial additional resources and organizational changes to provide excellence in student information systems to the MIT community.

Based on these findings – and with the support of the Executive Vice President and Provost – Dean Redwine and Jerry Grochow, Vice President for Information Services and Technology, made a joint recommendation to integrate SSIT with IS&T, to optimize resources and gain significant synergies.

Collaboration and Leadership

There have already been many collaborative working sessions between SSIT and Administrative Computing to leverage knowledge, technologies, and processes – such as J2EE skills and project management methodologies. Grochow has met with key leaders of client DUE offices to share his vision and thoughts about the reorganization and its benefits. DUE and IS&T look

forward to working together to plan for the next generation of student information systems at MIT.

To this end, the Student Systems and Policies Coordinating Committee (SSPCC) will be appointed and co-chaired by Grochow and Redwine. The SSPCC will be made up of key clients (i.e. Registrar’s Office, Admissions, Student Financial Services, and Dean for Student Life) and will advise IS&T leadership on project prioritization and resource allocation decisions that impact student information systems at MIT.

A search is under way for a new Director of Administrative and Student Information Services to lead these mission-critical efforts.

Questions?

Community members who have questions or concerns about administrative or student IT services during this transition can send email to the Transition Team at <ist-ssit@mit.edu>. This email address will remain active through December 2005.



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 email, you can send your questions to the corresponding email 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



MIT is home to many intelligent machines. MERTZ (see lead article) is part of a much larger community of robots, sociable and otherwise – just as CSAIL's Humanoid Robotics Group is one of many labs and teams at the Institute working on machines that can sense, reason, and do.

To get a better idea of the robotic landscape on campus, check out the web sites listed on the right. This list isn't comprehensive, but it does provide a sense of where things are headed. (Is there an android in your future?)

6.270 – MIT's Autonomous Robot Design Competition

<http://web.mit.edu/6.270/>

Cognitive Machines Group

<http://www.media.mit.edu/cogmac/robotsandsims.html>

Laboratory for Human and Machine Haptics (Touch Lab)

<http://touchlab.mit.edu/>

MIT Museum – Robots and Beyond: Exploring Artificial Intelligence at MIT

<http://web.mit.edu/museum/exhibitions/robots.html>

MIT News Office: Robotics / Artificial Intelligence

<http://web.mit.edu/newsoffice/topic/robotics.html>

Model-Based Embedded and Robotic Systems

<http://mers.csail.mit.edu/mers.htm>

Robotic Life

<http://robotic.media.mit.edu/>

