

I had the good fortune of interviewing a father/son pair for this assignment. The father (Martin Demaine) is a Visiting Scientist in the Lab for Computer Science at MIT, and the son (Erik Demaine) is a 22-year old professor (yes, I did say professor) of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science. It was interesting to see two generations of thought. Most of the interviewing was done via email, as their (particularly Erik's) schedule did not allow for a proper face-to-face discussion. Martin works with several students at the moment, and teaches a seminar now and then, and publishes around two-four articles a year. Erik has a full teaching load, with advisees and researches and publishes copiously. It was a three-way "conversation" of sorts. [I realize this is a bit away from the assignment – but these two are a fascinating pair. For the purposes of writing, I'll break them into two parts.] These email discussions (and one short face to face with Martin in person) were pretty free flowing – though I did try to offer structured questions, their time was limited and we ended up focusing on topics of interest to them. Such is the nature of busy scientists.

### *Erik*

It should first be noted that Erik is 22 years old. In many cases he is the same age as the students he teaches – and in some cases, younger. He is not your average professor – not even by MIT standards. He was home schooled by his father from the age of seven until he went to college at age twelve. He has been teaching at MIT for two years. He has seen his use of electronic resources continue to grow and expects it to continue. It facilitates his research and teaching. He feels that his students simply won't bother finding a resource if they can't access it electronically. While he does find this a sad trait of today's students – he feels the best way to combat this is to make everything available electronically. He realizes this is a grand view – and if not possible at the moment – then high coverage of the important resources in his field is crucial. [Note: EE and Comp. Sci, not surprisingly, have very good electronic coverage of material. So taking it to the extreme of "everything" – while an extreme, is actually more feasible than for other disciplines, at least for current publications.] Questions were asked, though not answered, regarding specific library usage and resources recommended to students. It is safe to say that he (and his students) mainly uses our electronic collections – but he will certainly consult paper if needed.

As MIT is examining the possibility of building a new Science and Engineering Library in the near future (near =  $\pm$  ten years), our questions turned to thinking about a library. Looking to the future (15 years or so), he feels the library will be more like an archive – and the most important role will be the librarian's assistance in locating information. He thinks the physical space will still have its role – but for his field, electronic access will be key. He'd like to see more special collections happen, for

example, animation, graphics, and audio – thereby giving the library a more interactive feel. He'd like to see a collection showing the connection between science and art. (something both he and his father are very interested in). Amusingly, when asked what feature a new library could have to make it innovative – his response was a coffee shop inside the library. He makes the good point of the ability to browse a paper collection – and do so in a comfortable way. This made me think about the growing number of students who will have used paper resources less and less. Anything that we as librarians can do to encourage them to use these resources (that we pay dearly for) would be beneficial. Overall, he is quite satisfied with the resources provided by the Libraries.

### ***Martin***

The discussion(s) with Martin were very interesting. He has a great fondness for libraries and while he appreciates the ease of electronic access, he sometimes feels something is getting lost in the mix. The ability to browse a collection is very important to him. He told a story of one closed collection that he wished to browse, but could not gain access. So he started at the beginning of the call # range and started requesting 10 books at a time – in call # order. He did this for weeks. He thinks he almost drove a librarian crazy over that. His point is a good one though – and many scholars note the serendipitous joy of finding a book or topic that they had not known existed before – merely by looking around the shelves. Or finding the perfect resource next to the one that they went looking for that turned out to be only so so. He is annoyed that MIT doesn't have all the *Lecture Notes in Computer Science* in one place – as some are in storage and we class them separately. So he will often go to Harvard because they are all in the same place and classed under the same call number – again, facilitating browsing. He felt for a research institution, the hours of operation should be longer. He notes that it is once a month or so that he finds himself working later than the library is open and he will head off to another institution's library to find the information. (not exactly what we want). But even with these comments – he still continually went back to his love of libraries, and how he loves just wandering the stacks and enjoying the “eclectic knowledge that librarians have”. He feels this knowledge should be used to attract students into the library. (he and I are going to brainstorm this at a later date!). He has always encouraged his students to use the library and browse collections – and if they won't do it in the physical library then attempt to do it online. He felt the library should have more social responsibility – because they are holders of knowledge. He did not elaborate on exactly what he meant by this – he just noted my recent time working with teacher/librarians in South Africa as an example. Lastly, we got into a very long discussion over art and libraries and collaboration with various departments -- from mathematically based paper folding, to building furniture out of books. We are going to continue brainstorming this as well!