# Chapter 7
# MyLibrary at Brooklyn College:
## Developing a Suite of Digital Tools

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## ABSTRACT

*The Office of Academic Information Technologies (AIT) at Brooklyn College is based in the college library and has a history of successful innovation in developing in-house digital tools for the use of students, faculty and the library staff. In tight budgetary times developing software solutions in-house has not only improved services at lower cost than commercial products but also tailored them to the library's needs. There is some discussion of earning income from selling one of the tools to other libraries, however commercialization is not a prime motivator in the creation of the software. This chapter explores one aspect of the work done by AIT, the development of a set of digital tools called MyLibrary Suite.*

## INTRODUCTION

Brooklyn College (BC), founded in 1930, is one of the oldest of the senior colleges in the City University of New York (CUNY) system, the third-largest university system in the United States, and has full-time equivalent enrollment of 13,000, of whom 2000 are graduate students. The Brooklyn College Library, the most advanced in the CUNY system, is the academic, cultural and technological hub of the college. Students, faculty, staff and members of the surrounding community enjoy access

to the 1.5 million print materials housed at the library, more than 83,000 electronic books and journals and over 300 online databases. The library provides access to a wireless network and has more than 500 computers for public use. Additional services include, but are not limited to, the 24/7 Library Café, which houses a Starbucks and a 85+ computer facility, the New Media Center which manages the second floor computer lab, Woody Tanger Auditorium, group viewing and listening rooms, laptop and iPad loans; software skills courses taught by Academic Information Technologies (AIT) staff; and the Faculty Lab, which provides faculty training and development and manages multimedia classrooms. Library faculty are actively involved in supporting and encouraging faculty, staff and students as they contribute works to the CUNY institutional repository, Academic Works.

With such a large facility to service, the near-constant budget concerns of a public institution, and the ever-expanding role of technology in libraries, the AIT unit of the Brooklyn College library almost inevitably became more than a faculty support team and administrator of computer systems. This chapter discusses how and why AIT created a suite of digital tools for the benefit of library faculty, staff and students, shared some of the tools with other campus departments and libraries at other institutions, and learned some lessons along the way. It briefly touches on commercialization of software.

## MERGING THE LIBRARY WITH ACADEMIC INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES (AIT)

In the early 1990s, when developing a master plan for renovating the campus, senior administrators at Brooklyn College decided the new library would become the core location for the "transmission and retrieval of knowledge" on campus (Higginbotham, 1997). This decision was part of a trend discussed by Mary K. Bolin in her 2005 article in which she reported on the growing discussion about mergers of libraries and computer centers in the 1990's. Given the wide range of what constitutes an academic library, she focused her study on a group of similar institutions (land grant universities) while noting that such changes were occurring at all types of colleges and universities—large, small, public, and private. Bolin's description included that 88% of the universities she studied retained the traditional structure in which the library and computer centers reported separately to their respective administrators. She also noted that her study results seemed to "confirm Mech's assertion that the merged organization is a phenomenon of smaller institutions, and that when it does occur, the top administrator of the new organization is generally a librarian" (Bolin, 2005). This is what happened at Brooklyn College, where AIT reports to the chief librarian.

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