

6.811: Principles and Practice of Assistive Technology Campus Accessibility Lab Exercise

Objectives

- Survey the state of wheelchair accessibility on and around the MIT campus
- Understand the challenges and realities associated with using a wheeled mobility device

Activities

- Campus tour with wheelchairs
- Reflection discussion session in lab

Deliverables

- A facilities request for an accessibility improvement to MIT campus, also due **before lab**.
- Blog post about this topic (optional)

In this lab activity, you will use a wheelchair to get around campus while completing certain tasks that are common to activities of daily living. You are strongly encouraged to document your experience with notes, photos, and diagrams, as appropriate.

Instructions:

1. Obtain a wheelchair. Become familiar with how to use it.
2. Follow the instructions on the last page. You may do tasks 1-7 in any order. Bring a notebook with you. Although we do not have enough wheelchairs for everybody, this is intended to be an individual experience, so if you must have a partner, don't help one another unless there is a safety risk. Each person should submit a unique account of their experience.

During the tour of campus, you should:

- Note the location and details of any accessibility challenges that you encounter, including:
 - Difficulties due to non-functioning/malfunctioning equipment or facilities designed to facilitate accessibility
 - Recommendations that would improve the accessibility of campus (e.g. documentation of missing accessible affordances)
 - Make note of accessibility "successes," surprises, or personal encounters.
3. Return the wheelchairs.

Individual Reflection

Topics to think about:

- A. Document and discuss any accessibility challenges that you encountered. Can you think of ways that either the wheelchair or the environment itself could have been designed to ameliorate each challenge?
- B. Document and discuss your experiences with other people – did you perceive yourself or others experiencing any discomfort when you were speaking with strangers or ordering food? If you were able to take the tech shuttle then describe your experience getting on and off.
- C. Discuss what you learned about the realities and challenges of using a wheeled mobility device.

You should be prepared to discuss these topics during the lecture on Wednesday.

Facilities Request

You will encounter accessibility challenges during your trek across campus. We should let MIT Facilities know about them!

Write a request to facilities in which you identify one aspect in which the accessibility of the campus could be improved. Then, submit that request to MIT Facilities.

Instructions for Campus Accessibility Survey Lab Activity

1. Activity Guidelines
 - People should complete this lab and the written assignment on their own, when possible. No groups of more than 2 people.
 - Except when instructed otherwise, do not make use of your legs and do not exit the wheelchair unless your safety or that of another is at risk.
 - Ask for help only when you need it. Think about what you would/would not be comfortable with if you relied on the wheelchair for mobility.
2. Safety first, last, and always!
 - This is not a race! Move safely and carefully, especially if you have not used a wheelchair before. Be aware of yourself and your surroundings, and use your common sense.
 - In the event of a problem (e.g. malfunctioning wheelchair), return for assistance.

Tasks:

In this lab you will travel around MIT while voluntarily confined to a wheelchair. Your basic route will be to go from the Stata Center to or around the Student Center and then back. Throughout the trip, you will need to perform a number of tasks that are typical of activities of daily living. To begin, head toward Lobby 7 via one of the paths below (as indicated by the letter on the top of your sheet).

- a) Exit building 32 from the entrance closest to the gym in the Stata Center, then travel outside (within campus through the opening in building 26 and between buildings 24 and 12, not along Vassar Street). Enter building 7 at sidewalk level from Massachusetts Avenue.
- b) Travel on the third floor of buildings 32, 36, and 34, and 24 (a wheelchair lift will be involved). Go outside from building 24 and then travel outside toward Massachusetts Avenue. Enter building 7 at sidewalk level from Massachusetts Avenue.
- c) Travel in the tunnels from building 32 to building 26, then (above ground) along the Infinite Corridor.
- d) Travel on the third floor (designated by MIT as accessible) of buildings 32, 36, 34, 38, 39, and 37. Somewhere around building 37, the accessible path is on the fourth floor. Exit to Massachusetts Avenue from Building 35, go outside, and enter building 7 at sidewalk level from Massachusetts Avenue.

Along the way, perform each of the following tasks **in any order you see fit**, keeping in mind that you should avoid traveling in groups:

1. Get a drink of water from water fountains in two separate buildings.
2. Use the restroom (or go through the motions of doing so), both with and without a wheelchair. Time how long it takes you in each case and remember to not use your legs when using the wheelchair.
3. Engage three strangers in conversation (perhaps by asking for directions). Try not to volunteer that you're involved in a class project (but don't lie!).
4. From the entrance of a building (either from the street or from another building), time yourself going up one floor in two different ways:
 - i. using an elevator or a wheelchair lift while in your wheelchair; and
 - ii. using your legs and a stairwell (it is ok to leave the wheelchair sitting at the bottom of the stairwell for a few minutes while you walk up and down).
5. Get any paper form from the student information center in 7-121.

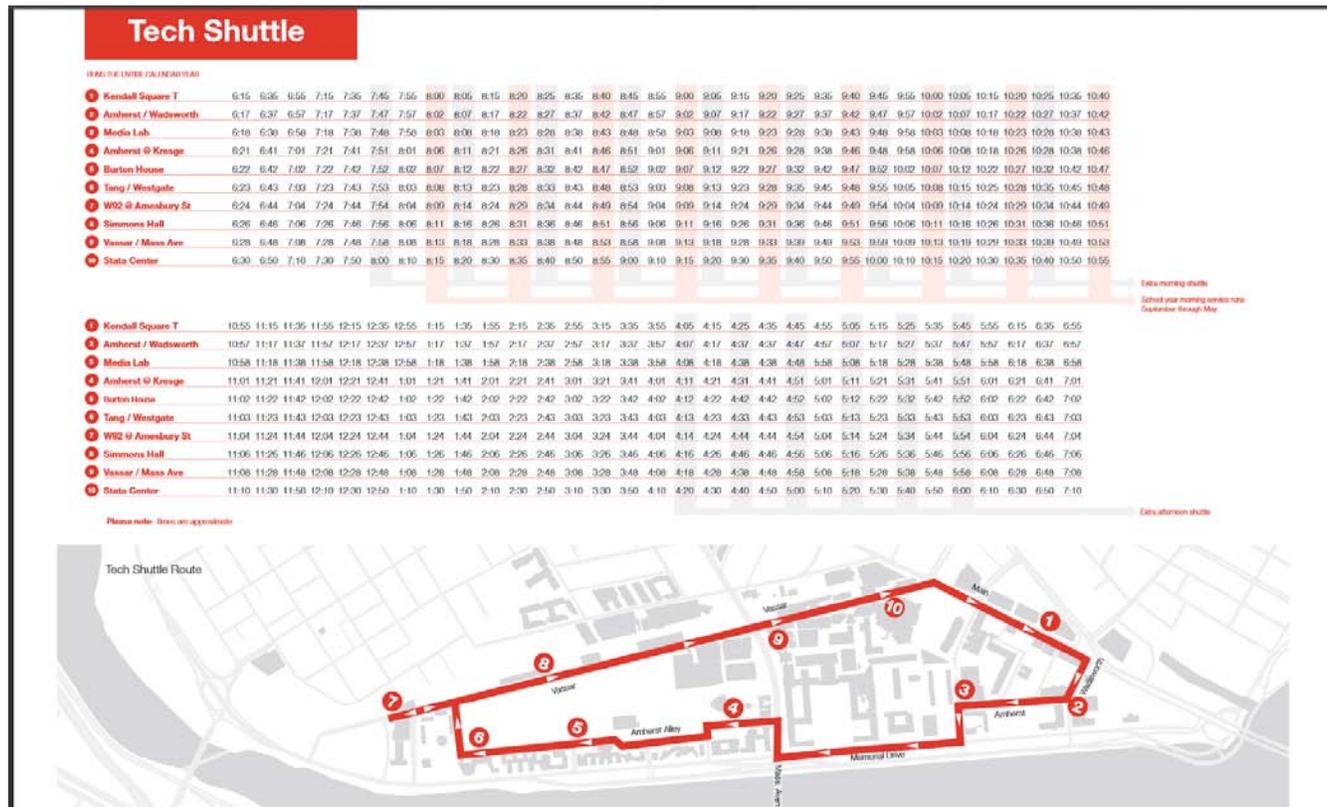
- Log onto any Athena-enabled computer and email the instructors with your location.
- Go to the stacks in the **basement** of Hayden Memorial Library (building 14) and note the title and author of a graduate thesis from the year at which you started at MIT.

Once you've completed the above tasks, exit building 7 and cross Massachusetts Ave. Depending on your preferences and remaining time, go to the Student Center *or* Flour. Order a snack or beverage and enjoy it in their common seating area.

Finally, return to 32-044 using a different route than the one you took. Optionally, take the Tech Shuttle, which picks up every ten minutes at Vassar & Mass., and goes directly to Stata.

Tech Shuttle Route:

<http://web.mit.edu/facilities/transportation/shuttles/schedules/tech.pdf>



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Fall 2014

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