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*Idea presentation*—"Embracing Better Learning"

This project comments on the dual nature of two of MIT's high-traffic, *often-used* library spaces. The libraries were created as warehouses of information, as central locations where students could come to access resources. They also allow for quiet spaces where library users can sit and peruse their material. Too often, however, students can be seen fighting off sleep as the comfortable chairs suggest they relax and succumb to their bodies' raging need for sleep. Even more brazen library-goers flout the very purpose of the space and sprawl out on the chairs in unabashed slumber.

This project attempts to allow the space to recognize the dual role it has taken on despite its original purpose. Pillows suggest the open acknowledgment of the chairs' roles as sleeping places. The audio provided is soothing as a lullaby. The words "sleep" on the placards and indicators presents the concept of *sleep* in an official setting that is thereby acceptable on the level of the site itself and its original intent.

Not only does the project help the user and the site agree and admit on the practical purpose of the place, but it also aids the user in exploiting the nature of the site to its full potential, which is at first glance unrealized. By sleeping, the student is catering to the demands of his or her body. He or she misses out, however, on valuable study time. This juxtaposition of the two actions, already suggested by the sleeping library-user, is natural and, in fact, profitable. Students can learn in their sleep. The pillows have text from advertisements for during-sleep audio learning tapes, as well as actual printed text from academia, which can be conveniently absorbed through the student's head while he or she is asleep. Scientific studies (from journals and the assumptions) corroborate the methods put forth in this project in the form of fact sheets on and around the chair.

Subtle differences between the words in each installation arise from the differences in the intended audiences of the sites themselves. The music library, of course, contains music and music-related resources. The focus of the audio in this installation is on soothing classical music, which has been shown to increase brain activity. Even non-musicians can learn these songs in their sleep. The informative (non-advertisement) text on the pillows has scores that can be absorbed and, after return to normal consciousness, played. The audio in the engineering library focuses on learning languages and how to do so in your sleep. The pillow text has some of the most useful equations in thermodynamic engineering itself, while the audio teaches chemistry. The attempt is made throughout the project to keep the presentation overly professional and to keep the installation as believable as possible.

The two particular libraries, Barker Engineering Library and Lewis Music Library, were chosen by the number of hours and days they are open during the year, the general appeal (non-specific and popular) of their resources, and the popularity of their reading spaces. The specific spaces within the library were chosen for their comfort and the likelihood of finding a student studying or sleeping there.

The work itself was spurred by the thought that public art needs to react to the community it serves and that the community can change it to serve its own needs. It was

spurred on by the idea of combining both the nominal and practical purposes of the space into a logical activity. The idea was further flushed out by the old notion of putting a book under your head when you sleep in hopes that some of the knowledge will seep into your head by the morning. The ideal duration would be a simple permanent installation in one corner of the reading areas, especially available during midterms and finals when students are the most stressed out but need to take in the most information. I realized after the project was on its way that I was creating it in the spirit of the infomercial-esque film we watched in class—a similar kind of sarcasm and practicality.

In making the signs, a quasi-official, semi-advertising tone was kept. This lends a believable, official tone to the project. This official nature makes the library user more at ease with accepting their other purpose in using the library space. The officiality is, however, obviously false, as the claims border on used-car-salesman forcefulness and the seemingly erroneous graphs lack of scientific, substantive proof. This points out the underlying farce in the project; that trying to combine two separate purposes into one single action just because both take place in the same space is ludicrous. The space can and is used for two distinct purposes, separately and on their own, whether or not they are the express purposes of the library itself.

The pillows were made to resemble the shape of a conventional rectangular white pillow, the most recognized and suggestive of sleep. Everything in the area of the space is there to suggest sleep, and to openly recognize both sleep and learning together. The most striking thing is that the project looks out of place; the two ideas (sleep and learning) juxtaposed are unusual enough to draw the attention of a librarygoer. Despite attempting subtlety with discretely place signs and markers, the project stands out, creating its own space within the larger space, where sleep and learning are permitted to take place together.

## **REFERENCES and works consulted during thought process**

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