Strategy for General Collections Space -- DRAFT

Background:
The MIT Libraries' services to the community continue to change and grow, and need to do so within given square footage and other limits. Our space is currently dedicated to three main purposes: tangible collections, users, and staff. The Report of the Working Group on the Future of Campus Teaching and Learning Spaces identifies a need for different kinds of community spaces, while the Framework for Space Planning in the MIT Libraries notes that we are below our peers in the square footage dedicated to users. Any increase in user space will necessitate a decrease in the staff and/or tangible collections spaces.

Historically, print collections have been the heart of the academic research library, and the Libraries has accordingly dedicated a large percentage of its footprint to collections. The MIT community continues to use and value the Libraries’ tangible collections; however, overall use has been declining over the years, due in large part to the popularity of and increasing investment in e-resources.

Parts of our tangible collections remain in demand by the community, especially in certain subject areas. Some of these materials, particularly in our special collections, have specific requirements that are outside the Libraries' usual infrastructure for access, security, shelving, environmental controls, etc. There is increasing demand for space to devote to our special collections needs as well as other library services for our community. At the same time, in-person browsing of physical collections still plays a role in discoverability, particularly in certain disciplines as online browsing tools are still maturing.

Goal:
As the Libraries continues to develop and manage its tangible collections, we aim to: adjust the space allocated to on-campus collections to address current and future campus needs; limit in-library materials to the most relevant as appropriate by subject; improve the arrangement of in-library collections to support ease of access and efficient, sustainable workflows; and optimize the use of off-campus facilities.

Strategies:
1. Collect digitally where it is the right choice for the community and its needs, and where a viable business model exists; acquire fewer tangible materials each year as appropriate by subject.
   The global accessibility and searchability of e-resources make them a popular choice with the MIT community. However, the availability and quality of digital content is not consistent across all disciplines. While the MIT community strongly prefers e-journals to print, many faculty and students still prefer tangible items for other types of materials.

   We are actively acquiring more e-content based on user needs and preferences and availability of content by:
   • switching our journal subscriptions from print to electronic wherever that option is available and the journal is preserved in a trusted digital repository;
   • preferring e-format for new journal subscriptions;
   • actively increasing our acquisition of e-books, with more than 500,000 now in the collection, including both current e-books and e-book backfiles; and
   • collaborating with external partners to limit duplication of new tangible acquisitions, when appropriate.

   The result of these changes is that the print collection is growing much more slowly, with the number of monographs and bound journals being added to the collection significantly smaller than 10 years ago. However, the print collection is still growing: we continue to receive books, journals, and other materials in tangible formats every year.
2. Appropriately leverage in-library collections space, keeping the newest and most used material on-campus.

Our tangible holdings are extensive and housing them all on-campus has not been an option for some time. Over the past 10 years, the Libraries’ square footage has been reduced by the closure of three branch libraries. Currently about 50% of our collections are in storage.

We are locating materials based on general guidelines of use, digital availability, and user needs by:

- keeping new and high-use monographs, and high-use journals without digital equivalents, in our libraries;
- moving moderate-use print journals without digital equivalents to the on-campus storage facility with same-day scanning service, as appropriate by subject and user needs; and
- sending monographs with very low use, and journals with digital equivalents or low use, to the remote shared storage facility with 48-hour scanning and delivery service, as appropriate by subject and user needs.

The Libraries has sent hundreds of thousands of items to storage over the past 10 years and has implemented a scan-and-deliver service to reduce access barriers to these materials. The Libraries aspire to further improve discovery and access to stored collections. We have also installed compact shelving in several locations to reduce overall on-campus collections space.

3. Improve accessibility of in-library collections by arranging materials to promote user self-service and efficient, sustainable workflows.

Our collections have grown organically over time in the unique physical layouts of our on-campus locations, and this has created some challenges in discoverability.

We are working to improve the arrangement of the Libraries' collections by:

- developing and maintaining logical flows for all of the collections;
- improving way-finding of the collections;
- achieving greater consistency of user experience with collections across the locations; and
- reducing barriers to physical accessibility.

The Libraries continues to make progress on these efforts through ongoing maintenance of the collections, small projects, and larger-scale changes as resources allow.

4. Appropriately optimize storage options and engage in national conversation about shared print and digital repositories.

Many of the items in the Libraries’ stored collections are also contained in other library collections around the world. Even within our shared storage facility, there are many duplicate items, and sometimes multiple copies, when MIT and one or more of the Harvard libraries stored a copy of the same material. We need to explore all of our options for reducing further duplication of stored collections and additional collaborative access agreements.

We are creating partnerships and establishing best practices that could reduce excessive duplication of items in library storage facilities across the country by:

- examining opportunities with Harvard to reduce current and future overlap in our shared storage facility;
- partnering with research libraries in New England to explore the possibility of establishing a regional print repository;
- participating in discussions about national networks of print and digital repositories; and
- supporting trusted digital repositories (e.g., Portico or HathiTrust) and striving to obtain perpetual e-access rights for our licensed resources to ensure their long-term accessibility and preservation.

In addition, the Libraries continues to build a strong network of partners (e.g., Borrow Direct or Rapid) to ensure items not owned by MIT are easily accessible to the community.