Being Earnest with Collections — Voting with our Dollars: Making a New Home for the Collections Budget in the MIT Libraries

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Column Editor's Note: *I am very happy to have* ***Ellen Finnie, MIT Libraries****, as a guest author this month. In this article,* ***ATG*** *readers will find a succinct review of recent changes in collections at* ***MIT****.* ***MIT*** *has created a department with two teams, Collection Strategists and Scholarly Communications, to work cooperatively in order to meet new institutional goals of making strategic use of collection funds while emphasizing support for high impact research and open access to faculty output. I hope this article will provide useful insight to institutions considering similar changes. —* ***MA***

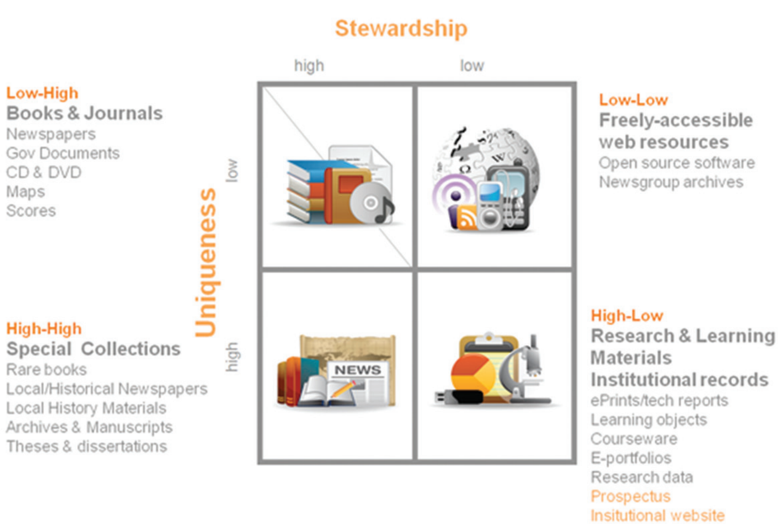
Under the vision and leadership of new **MIT Libraries** Associate Director for Collections **Greg Eow** and Director **Chris Bourg**, the management of the **MIT Libraries** collections budget has recently been incorporated into the scholarly communications program. Essentially, the collections budget is now an element under our scholarly communications umbrella.

Motivations

We made this change because we want to use our collections dollars — in a more systematic and strategic way — to transform the scholarly communications landscape towards more openness, and toward expanded, democratized access.

Part of this transformation also involves using our collections dollars as judiciously as possible in the marketplace, so we can invest in the collections that we believe will be most important in the future: those rare or unique to **MIT** and which help to distinguish our collections from those of other libraries and archives. In this sense, the incorporation of the collections budget into our scholarly communications program is part of a broader strategic pivot in which research libraries focus more on "inside out" collections — those in fewer collections, often generated by the university, often unique to that university — and less on "outside in" collections — those we buy from external sources to make available locally, and which appear in many universities' collections.

This concept has been portrayed by **Lorcan Dempsey** — who coined and popularized this terminology — as a grid with stewardship and uniqueness as the axes.[1]



COLLECTIONS GRID

At the **MIT Libraries**, we are strategically pivoting our collections to increasingly focus on these "inside out" collections — those on the bottom half in **Dempsey's** grid, with high uniqueness and which make the **MIT Libraries** distinct. The organizational changes are linked by a vision that optimizes spend on "outside in" collections and increases investment in "inside-out" collections.

The merger of the collections spend with the philosophy of newly emphasizing "inside out" collections and more open access to scholarly research is a natural extension of our scholarly communications program in the **MIT Libraries**. The scholarly communications program was launched in 2006 as an awareness-raising resource for authors at **MIT** regarding their rights to their work. In 2009 the program added a new focus: implementing the **MIT** Faculty Open Access Policy. Over the years, staff was repurposed (and limited FTEs were added)[2] in order to acquire and curate the collection of papers under the faculty policy, a collection housed in our institutional repository that has become a core element of our "inside-out" collections.

How this new merger of collections budget with scholarly communication and a focus on "inside out" collections is intended to play out is perhaps best explained through an analogy — voting with our collections dollars. This is an idea I first grasped through **Michael Pollan's** powerful and influential prose about food:

> "*Depending on how we spend them, our food dollars can either go to support a food industry devoted to quantity and convenience and 'value' or they can nourish a food chain organized around values — values like quality and health. Yes, shopping this way takes more money and effort, but as soon you begin to treat that expenditure not just as shopping but also as a kind of vote — a vote for health in the largest sense — food no longer seems like the smartest place to economize.*" *—* ***Michael Pollan****, In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto*

As discussed in a blog post on *IO: In the Open*,[3] **Pollan** has encouraged us to leverage consumer power to transform food systems toward health for people and the planet. In the **MIT Libraries**, we believe that by adopting this vote-with-your dollars approach to spending our collections budget, we will be contributing to transforming the scholarly communication system towards a healthier environment for people and the planet, too.

This will mean, as **Pollan** suggests, assessing value in a broader, more holistic way than relying primarily on traditional measures like list price versus impact or cost per download. For as **Pollan** points out, when evaluating cost, we need to incorporate *full* costs in our assessments. Some foods come cheap but cause health or environmental problems that are not included in the price we pay. In the same way, some pay-walled purchases may seem to offer value in the moment, but may cost us dearly in lost opportunity through artificially limited access, less efficient science and scholarship, and the resulting slower progress working on the greatest problems facing humanity.

In making a more holistic and values-based assessment, we will be using a new lens: assessing potential purchases in relation to whether they transform the scholarly communication system towards openness, or make a positive impact on the scholarly communication environment in some way, whether via licensing, access, pricing, or another dimension. Of course, like shoppers in the supermarket, we'll need to

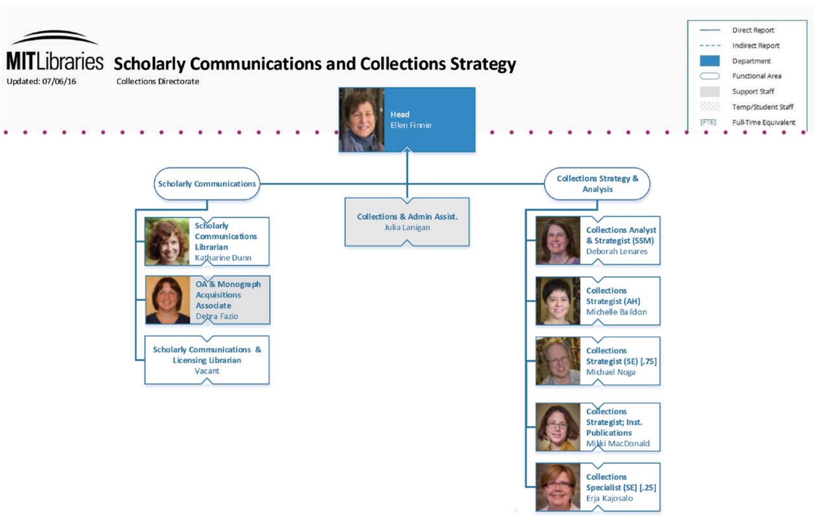
continued on page 00

Being Earnest with Collections
from page 00

view our purchase options with more than just one lens. We have finite resources, and we must meet our community's current and rapidly evolving needs while supporting other community values, such as diversity and inclusion. So the lens of transforming the scholarly communications system is only one of many we will look through when we decide what to buy, and from what sources. Part of our aim will be to use our collections dollars for "outside-in" materials that advance our objectives of making science and scholarship as openly available as possible. What new practices and policies we will shape and how we will integrate the views from multiple lenses to make our collections decisions is something we will be exploring in the coming months — and years.

Organizational Model

The organizational model that we have established to achieve these aims includes two teams under a single department: the collections strategists team, and the scholarly communications team. The strategists team consists of subject and collection analysis experts for three broad discipline areas: arts and humanities; science and engineering; and social sciences and management, and a new position, a strategist for Institute publications, focusing on our "inside-out" collections such as **MIT** technical reports and theses.



The concept behind this organization is that a middle layer of collections strategists lies in between the subject specialists/selectors and the department head and Associate Director level, allowing us to move to more holistic and big-picture strategic thinking about our collections spend. The union of strategists with librarians who have extensive experience negotiating licenses (e.g., the Scholarly Communications and Licensing Librarian) and with those who provide open access and copyright support (e.g., the Scholarly Communications Librarian) affords us the opportunity to fully leverage our library content licenses towards transforming the scholarly communications ecosystem.

With this new configuration we aim to build a team that has expertise in the areas of author rights, copyright, and open access issues, and a strong sense of where we are going to advance our objectives in those areas, but also has content expertise, expertise in the scholarly publishing market, and expertise in how to leverage a collections budget towards particular strategic aims.

Manifesting these Changes in Practice

The changes described here were put in place between January and May 2016. They are very new, and it will be some time before we can provide a meaningful report on what the new model has allowed us to achieve, or what its limitations have turned out to be.

In practice, we have begun to take steps that hint at some of the techniques that we may be using and which are more available to us because of the organizational change and new values focus.

Here are some of the examples from our first 5 months:

Experimental fund — For the past few years, the Libraries had been allocating a significant dollar amount ($100K) to a central fund for purchases that didn't fit within tight and limited subject lines. For the most part, these funds were used for journal backfiles. With the creation of Scholarly Communications and Collections Strategy (SCCS), we have launched this fund in a new way, as an experimental fund designed to support forward-looking products, services, and models that align with our goals and values.

We established the following criteria for the newly renamed "experimental fund" and opened up a proposal process to the entire staff:

- Innovative, forward-looking
- Align with the Libraries' and Scholarly Communications and Collections Strategy Department's goals of:
    - meeting the ever-evolving needs of our community
    - transforming the scholarly communication system towards openness
    - advancing diversity and inclusion
- Having high and/or broad impact (effect on users, numbers of users)

(and, as a practical issue, feasible to start by end of the fiscal year).

We received 17 proposals and decided to fund 4 which fully met the criteria, including:

- Initiating our first Web archiving program for the *MIT.edu* domain — via Internet Archive's hosted Web archiving service, Archive-It;
- Supporting a drone program to create a collection of open access aerial imagery to be used in an active course this summer and beyond;
- Testing electronic scores, to learn how users will take advantage of annotation and other capabilities; and
- Providing a streaming video service, which for us is a new undertaking that will meet a long-standing need for access to films for teaching.

We are excited by the engagement of the staff in the process, by the range of ideas that emerged, and by the opportunity to explore these four new areas in the coming months. These projects either help us build "inside-out" collections, or have impact by filling service gaps, and move us beyond a focus on traditional commercial "outside-in" collections purchases.

Negotiations team approach — A part of Associate Director for Collections **Greg Eow's** vision in creating this new organizational model was to move to a team-based approach for negotiating licenses. Because licensing and scholarly communication initiatives were separated organizationally from collections and acquisitions functions, our negotiation process had become a linear "hand off" model where first price was negotiated by collections and acquisitions and other license terms — including those supporting scholarly communication values — were negotiated as a second step. This model did not allow us to combine our areas of expertise or to leverage the negotiation fully, since issues were discussed sequentially rather than holistically, and our efforts and approaches, though somewhat coordinated, were in many ways siloed.

Our new negotiations team is made up of our electronic resources librarian, the SCCS department head, a content expert (a rotating responsibility, with one of our subject specialists volunteering each year) and our licensing librarian. For discipline-focused negotiation, we draw in the relevant content expert as well. This group is committed to the premise that "we are smarter together," and in particular to principled, rather than position-based bargaining (which will be familiar to readers of the well-known book *Getting to Yes*.)

Negotiation with everything on the table — Like many libraries, we've been using our library content

continued on page 00

Being Earnest with Collections
from page 00

licenses as a significant and important opportunity to meet campus needs related to scholarly communication. Some key language we focus on to promote access that is as open as possible includes fair use rights; author rights for reuse of articles they authored that appear in the licensed content; scholarly sharing language; use in MITx classes (i.e., MOOCs, or Massive Open Online Courses); interlibrary lending; off-setting strategies to support open access publishing in relation to toll-access publishing; access for walk-in users; perpetual access; and text/data mining rights. As part of our support for author reuse rights, we aim for publisher agreements that allow us to fulfill the wish of our faculty, as stated in their Open Access Policy, that "compliance with the policy" be "as convenient for the faculty as possible."

Since forming SCCS we have had two successes with this kind of approach. As described in a recent "IO: In the Open" blog post, through our new agreement and partnership, **Springer** will send final peer-reviewed manuscripts of **MIT**-authored scholarly papers directly to the Open Access Articles Collection of DSpace@MIT, the Institute's open access repository. This will reduce the burden on authors to locate and deposit the correct version of their manuscripts, and, because we can pass metadata through from **Springer** and apply our own automatically during the deposit process, this arrangement will also speed deposit and cataloging time for library staff.

We also carried out a rewarding and fruitful negotiation in a situation that started from a very difficult place — a large commercial vendor putting forward a price increase between nine and ten times what we had been paying (along with an altered purchase model). Following the principled negotiation model, and taking full advantage of our combination of subject, collections, and acquisitions expertise, we identified mutual interests, explicitly stated our values and principles, and worked together with the information provider to carve out a deal that worked for both parties. We were able to keep the content available to our users — something that looked nearly impossible at the outset — and advanced many of our scholarly communication objectives by incorporating them into our negotiations, including

- Added support for perpetual access
- Use in Course packs
- Use in Course reserves
- Use in MITx (MOOCs) — for figures/tables/ illustrations Reiterating an existing commitment to interlibrary loan
- All use allowed for under U.S. copyright law, including fair use
- Text/data mining access
- Guaranteed caps on price increases for other products being purchased from the same provider

While we thought we would have to walk away from anything but a very reduced title-by-title purchase of this provider's content, at significant cost to our users and in labor intensive ordering and record keeping workflows, using our new team-based and principled approach we were able to achieve a solution that meets user needs, opens the content up for more uses at **MIT**, and advances our longer term objectives. The negotiation included many firsts, including our first open acknowledgement to an information provider that we had been paying less than our perceived value of the material. Feedback from the information provider about the process was positive, providing support for the concept that principle-based bargaining builds relationships rather than undermining them, as rigid "line in the sand" position-based bargaining can.

We are just beginning to imagine and adopt practices that take full advantage of our new organizational model. We hope these examples will be joined by many others as we build experience, train ourselves to look at things more broadly, and identify opportunities.

Working more closely with the MIT Press — Our new organizational model, because of its collapsing of scholarly communications aims with a budget to advance them, also positions us to work more effectively with the **MIT Press**. The Press, under the new leadership of Director **Amy Brand**, is examining opportunities for more open access publishing efforts. It's too early to report on any outcomes, but we are excited and energized by this partnership. And we see the **MIT Libraries'** focus on "inside-out" collections as a perspective from which to consider how to participate in library-based publishing (however that is defined) for the first time.

What we aren't doing – ignoring current needs — The question we receive most frequently in regard to organizational changes is "what will you do when a faculty member wants a new **Elsevier** journal? Will you say no?" This question seems to reflect the anxiety we all feel about telling our constituents we can't — or won't — meet their needs. Our organizational change is not about denying our faculty the resources they need: We are adding a new set of lenses for making collections decisions, not removing any that we've been using. Meeting our community's current and evolving needs remains paramount. We are not suggesting that one lens be exclusive or necessarily even primary — but rather that we will approach our purchases with thoughtful consideration of competing viewpoints and values, and try to make wise choices based on all the lenses we use.

What's Next

So our efforts in the early months have taken us in the direction of transforming the scholarly communication landscape towards more openness, through a variety of techniques — open access deposits, negotiated rights that allow use in MITx (MOOC) courses, perpetual access to more commercial material, and building local "inside out" collections by spending our collections dollars in new ways.

This year we will lead a restructuring process for our collections budget so that it more fully supports our strategic aims, making it more possible for us to move flexibly to innovate and spend to achieve our goals and influence the market in positive ways. We will also be exploring and documenting what it means philosophically and practically to use our collections dollars to advance the openness of the scholarly communication system and social justice, diversity, and inclusion. We are at a redrawn starting line on a journey that will no doubt involve some dead ends, some traffic jams, and many reroutings. While I know we will face challenges intellectually and practically, I believe that fundamentally with our new organizational model we have put ourselves — as my GPS app tells me in such an optimistic way — "on the fastest route" to our intended destination: a scholarly communication landscape friendlier to universities, their authors, and readers of their research outputs.

Endnotes

1. See *http://orweblog.oclc.org/Outside-in-and-inside-out-redux/* and *http://orweblog.oclc.org/Web-sightings/*.

2. Our implementation system and workflow models in support of the MIT Faculty Open Access Policy are described in: **Duranceau, Ellen Finnie** and **Sue Kriegsman**. "Campus Open Access Policy Implementation Models and Implications for IR Services." In: Making IRs Work, Purdue University Press, November 2015. *https://dspace.mit.edu/handle/1721.1/99738*. And: **Duranceau, Ellen Finnie** and **Sue Kriegsman**. "Implementing Open Access Policies Using Institutional Repositories." Chapter 5 of: *The Institutional Repository: Benefits and Challenges*. ALA ALCTS, eversion published January 2013. *http://www.ala.org/alcts/sites/ala.org.alcts/files/content/resources/papers/ir_ch05_.pdf*

3. Note some of this material in this section appeared in a similar form at: *http://intheopen.net/2016/03/#sthash.Tw1c4YY3.dpuf* and *http://intheopen.net/2016/04/using-library-content-licenses-to-shape-the-scholarly-communications-landscape/*.