Response to the Recommendations of the Review Committee for the Cyclical Review of ROAAR, McGill Library
Submitted to: Phil Smith, Director CUR
Submitted by: Nathalie Cooke, AD ROAAR, McGill Library
Date: 17 February 2017

The McGill Library and all members of ROAAR would like to take this opportunity to thank the Cyclical Review Committee members for their thoughtful deliberations and extremely helpful feedback. We are aware that this takes valuable time and energy and really appreciate the dedicated time that was devoted to helping us think through our challenges and best solutions.

On the whole, we are in agreement with the priorities outlined for us by the Review Committee, and, in a number of cases, have already begun moving forward. Consequently, we have organized our response to the various recommendations in three categories: (A) areas where we have already launched initiatives aligned with the recommendation; (B) near-term priorities; and (C) longer-term priorities and points of discussion. All of the Committee’s recommendations are included in the document below, followed by our responses.
A. ACTION ALREADY UNDERWAY AND/OR ONGOING

1. ROAAR COHESIVE CULTURE: The Dean, Associate Dean, and the four individual unit heads must immediately bring the staff of all areas of ROAAR together as a group and insist that it function as a single cohesive unit. Underway. Since the creation of ROAAR, staff members have been collaborating on an e-newsletter, meeting monthly as a group, and sharing their news and expertise. Communication and collaboration among the unit heads has increased, particularly in the area of acquisitions, collections development, digitisation, and exhibitions. Staff members from the four units are already recognizing and supporting one another, and communicating through the ROAAR rubric.

2B. and 2C. RARE BOOKS REORGANIZATION: McGill University must prioritize the construction of efficient storage and retrieval systems for its special collections to provide greater access and security to the treasures that they house. The new director of the Rare Books and Special Collections component of ROAAR must immediately design and implement a project to organize, catalogue, and shelve the various materials presently scattered in the area. Underway. Planning is taking place with Diane Koen, Senior Director, Planning and Resources, about obtaining and arranging the necessary configuration of storage units. Discussions are ongoing with Collection Services, Rare Books and Special Collections (RBSC) staff and the Associate Dean of User Services about what should be housed in RBSC and how to make best use of shelving space. The Library is additionally moving forward with the Fiat Lux fundraising campaign to improve the Library’s infrastructure.

3 and 3A.: UNIFIED COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES: The Associate Dean and the four unit directors should immediately design and implement, with the help of a ROAAR-specific committee, a single unified set of collection development guidelines that will work across the four groups, replacing the extant separate approaches to purchases and acquisitions. Underway. We agree that better collection assessment and usage information is critical to creating collection development guidelines, and improved comparative collection assessment tools must be identified.

4. COLLECTION ACCESS: The Dean, Associate Deans, and Directors must ensure that key priorities are shared across the entire McGill Library and that units like ROAAR can identify them and assess the extent to which unit practices are conformant with the general strategies. Underway. Close collaboration with User Services, Digital Initiatives, and Collection Service is enabling ROAAR to advance a shared vision of priorities, and measurement tools are in development.

4A. CATALOGUING: The Dean must ensure that materials are catalogued in a timely and accurate manner, recognizing that edits can still be made after materials are visible to end-users. Remember, “basic” cataloguing access to everything can be provided without it being “perfect” cataloguing. Underway. To address the concern that the Dean must ensure that materials are catalogued in a timely and accurate manner, a number of measures have been implemented. Automatic transferring of collections from the rest of Library into RBSC has been suspended until a new plan for handling the influx is designed and implemented. The Head of RBSC is working with Collection Services to prioritise projects to increase the number of items in the catalogue. Cataloguing is being outsourced where possible. Collection-level records for
all groups of collections without access will be provided, with collaboration from Collection Services. As of February 2017, McGill University Archives (MUA) has begun tracking materials to monitor usage and eliminate paper records in favour of online, with finding aids being scanned and uploaded into the catalogue, and records created for archival materials. Similar initiatives have been partially implemented in RBSC and will soon be implemented in Osler.

5. and 5A. DEVELOP DIGITIZATION PROJECTS: Without abandoning internal scanning programs and partnerships with vendors, it is imperative that ROAAR develop and implement digitization projects at a higher scale than is presently the case and that the unit do so by seeking outsourcing partners and grants to fund these operations. ROAAR, in concert with the Dean and Associate Dean, should develop policies, processes, and procedures to delineate a multi-year agenda for the systematic digitization from McGill Library collections. In addition, there must be clearly stated “ground rules” or “guiding principles” to evaluate opportunities from commercial vendors wishing to digitize Library collections and to negotiate agreements that are beneficial to McGill and scholars worldwide. Ongoing. ROAAR is currently developing a CLIR grant application for a joint digitization project with the Blavatnick Archive in NYC, based on complementary holdings around the First World War. Discussions are underway with Canadiana, Gale, and Adam Matthew for pilot digitization projects with each to begin in 2017. As well, in collaboration with Jenn Riley (AD, Digital Initiatives) the ROAAR group is developing policies, processes and procedures to delineate a multi-year agenda for the systematic digitization of the ROAAR collections.

6. OUTREACH: Given the breadth and depth of the ROAAR collections, the unit should develop a program to share information about the treasures in this McGill collection by mounting a series of regular (and extraordinary) exhibitions and displays with special emphasis on the uniqueness and identity and by working with well-chosen partnerships. Ongoing. Both Osler and RBSC mount regular exhibitions, often using faculty members or other experts as guest curators, with frequent collaboration between units. The Visual Arts Collection (VAC) provides weekly tours to the public and is working in close collaboration with the Museum of Fine Arts and the City of Montreal to develop specialized tours for the outdoor exhibitions being held on the campus for the City’s 375th birthday. A SSHRC Connections Grant Proposal is being planned for submission in August 2017 to support a speaker series in 2017-18. The ROAAR e-newsletter as well as its various social media channels are being developed in collaboration with Merika Ramundo the Library’s Communications Officer. In January 2017, ROAAR decided to increase the number of exhibition cases on display in the Library, and the exhibit roster will showcase a minimum of 4 exhibits per year (rather than the previous 2).

7. RECORDS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM: Working with the Secretary General of the University, the Office of the Provost & Vice-Principal (Academic), and the Chief Information Officer, McGill must purchase, install, and support a new archival management system. Underway. As the result of ongoing meetings to identify an archival management system, we will begin testing AToM in February 2017 to be used for archival materials across ROAAR. A management tool for visual materials within the VAC and other ROAAR units will be the next goal for this group.
7A. As its number one priority, the McGill Library must advertise and fill the position of University Archivist to lead the records management program. He or she should be given the mandate by the Associate Dean and the University Librarian to identify needed changes to policies, processes, and services, and the support to undertake them. Underway. Position posting has been drafted and sent for translation.
B. NEAR-TERM PRIORITIES

2 and 2A.: ROAAR TO THE 4TH FLOOR: As much as possible and as quickly as possible, the staff and collections of the four units should be brought together physically as well, preferable in a contiguous, well-appointed space on the 4th floor of the McLennan Building. In planning for the relocation of staff to the 4th floor of the McLennan, attention should be given to creating a more exciting and efficient reader services area, reader spaces, and teaching spaces in the form of appropriately designed and equipped classrooms. We agree that ROAAR staff should be brought together, and that improved flexible teaching/lecture space for RBSC is needed. This should be planned in relation to any staff movements so available space on the 4th and 6th floors is used to best advantage. We further agree that teaching spaces should not be separated from the fourth floor, lest it be usurped for other purposes when not used; and, in light of the Fiat Lux building project, more extensive renovations should be put on hold for the time being. Consequently, Diane Koen is working with the ROAAR group to identify work spaces for at least 7 additional staff members on the 4th floor, and to configure furniture to allow for a teaching and large meeting space (for readings and talks) in what is currently space dedicated to rare material, and to move some of the materials in the current staff area to shelves on the 4th floor but on the other side of the building.

3A. ADVISORY COUNCIL: Underway. We agree that it would be useful to consider the formation of a unit-wide collection advisory. Already, the head of RBSC is collaborating with the head of MUA on acquisitions planning, and they benefit from closer understanding of complementary collections thanks to increased dialogue between the ROAAR units.

4B. BORROWING, LOANS AND TRACKING RESOURCES: The Dean and Associate Deans must work with ROAAR units to abandon paper files and spreadsheets to track borrowed materials (including loans to other institutions) and to ensure that special collections materials are tracked in an online environment, using methods that are common for all library resources. See above for RBSC and Osler. MUA uses a Microsoft Access database (created in house) that can be easily switched to the library-wide system, except for some file transfers that contain sensitive information. This transition will follow the identification and launch of the new archival management system.

4C. READER SERVICES: The Dean and the Associate Dean must work with the individual unit head of the ROAAR group to develop a common set of standards and expectations for supporting research and teaching that applies across the respective units. Currently, members of the RBSC, Osler and VAC reach out and work with faculty and students. Describing and promoting what the units could do to support teaching and learning would be useful. Discussion with the AD of User Services, who joined McGill in January 2017, will be initiated.

5B. DIGITAL PRESERVATION: McGill should, wherever possible, take advantage of cooperative solutions for access to and preservation of digitized collection. ROAAR, in close consultation with AD Digital Initiatives and Collection Services, is investigating partnerships with a number of key organizations. McGill has a longstanding partnership with Hathi Trust and uploads digitized material to the Internet Archive.
6A. OUTREACH: Promoting the resources of ROAAR should not be limited to the staff of these units. We recommend that the Associate Dean and the new AUL for Public Services work together to ensure that relevant public services and subject liaison librarians are engaged with ROAAR staff to promote the collections and their use to the McGill communities they serve. As a consequence of this suggestion, which aligns with our own thinking, we have expanded our partnership network. For instance, staff members from all four ROAAR units currently partner with colleagues in Digital Collections and Collections Services on a shared Instagram account @McGill_rare. Within the library system, we partner closely with other units, including the Islamic Studies Library and rare collections in Music and Law. A SSHRC Connections grant to host a speaker series is being developed in collaboration with approximately 20 faculty members across McGill. The VAC works directly with Public Affairs, University Advancement, Teaching and Learning Services, and Faculties (who promote the collections in their buildings). ROAAR units will explore other means of promoting their collections and services to librarians and staff, such as open houses.

6B. OUTREACH: The McGill website should feature updated, consistently branded, and consistently edited information about ROAAR, its collections, its policies, and contact information. We have received compliments on the VAC and Osler websites. Both the RBSC and MUA sites need to be revisited. The former director of RBSC, who has invaluable specialized knowledge, is fully engaged in updating collections descriptions. These will become the content for revised and updated web pages showcasing RBSC collections. Currently, Osler and RBSC are the only two units whose websites connect or link back directly to the Library (using the Home button). At present, VAC and MUA are stand-alone sites; MUA does not have this navigational functionality. Revisiting the MUA site is a longer-term goal, and one only to be achieved when we can increase staffing in the unit. Related projects include: transfer of the MUA website from its current server to the Library’s server; database testing/improvements; and a content audit.

The creation of a ROAAR web presence could be created to act as an “umbrella” page housing the links to the main pages of the units, along with policy and contact information. This will address the cohesiveness and branding of ROAAR.

7B. ARCHIVES STAFFING. To allow the Archives to meet its mandate, several additional positions are required and should be filled as soon as possible, including but not limited to an archival cataloguer in Collection Services and some archives processing professionals. Near-term Priority. Within the Library, hiring of archival cataloguers and processors would fall to the purview of the AD, Collections Services, who believes that two full positions are needed. We agree that these positions are badly needed. For ROAAR, one urgent and absolutely critical need is an additional records manager for MUA; at the moment, the one staff member in Records Management is unable to keep up with the University’s needs. When Archives moved to the Library, it seems that not all of the hiring lines previously associated with it moved in concert. The Library Dean will need appropriate financing of this position as a minimum to ensure appropriate archival, records management, and policy compliance.
C. LONGER-TERM GOALS AND DISCUSSION POINTS

2D. RELOCATING OSLER ROOM AND COLLECTIONS: While likely to be contentious, the Dean and Associate Dean together with other members of the Library’s senior team should immediately begin planning how to move the Osler from its current location to be part of new spaces and an integral component of McGill’s rare books collections. There are issues that need to be addressed before such a move can be considered, including: the long history of the Osler within the Faculty of Medicine; the lack of space within the Humanities and Social Sciences Library; and the historic paneling within the current Osler room that cannot be easily moved. The Osler Library Board of Curators must be involved in any consideration of this recommendation.

2E. RELOCATING ARCHIVAL RARE COLLECTIONS: Given that HVAC acclimatization facilities are not available in the McLennan basement, to protect the historical record of McGill University and to ensure the integrity and conservation of the archival/rare materials, the latter should be move as quickly as possible to where such conditions can be guaranteed. We certainly agree that it is important to house material in a climate controlled area, particularly as a requirement for retaining Archives’ status to collect archival materials. Prior to moving, it is also crucial to ensure there is both dedicated, secure and appropriate space and storage materials (e.g. acid-free boxes) to properly house the collections. However, this item is directly linked to the Fiat Lux project and its timeline is therefore linked to fundraising.

7. RECORDS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM: Working with the Secretary General of the University, the Office of the Provost & Vice-Principal (Academic), and the Chief Information Officer, McGill must purchase, install, and support a new archival management system. We agree that MUA, in concert with the McGill Library, the Secretary General of the University Office of the Provost & Vice-Principal (Academic), and the Chief Information Officer needs to investigate a content (records) management system that is university-wide for the management, classification and disposition of digital records, including a digital preservation strategy for the records. Given the practical logistics of the many stakeholders, we have placed this item in the category of ‘longer-term objectives’ even though we agree that this is of significance.

8. The Associate Dean should consider the case for
   a) “Re-animating” the CAC
   b) Reassigning responsibility for the management of all art and non-book material collections from across all units of the Library to VAC
   c) Reorganizing archives by subject/collection, that is by what logically goes together rather than by where it was originally acquired (Osler or Rare or Archives)
   d) Reconsidering how materials are accessed and possibly creating a new service point for ROAAR once the units are housed together
   e) Assessing the need for a “collection conservation” librarian.

a) We view this as a near-term objective, but it will depend on the ability of the AD, Use Service to hire additional Liaison Librarians. At the moment, a key RBSC Librarian is serving as Liaison for Art History and Architecture during 40% of her time.
b) Discussions are underway and cataloguing can begin when priorities are established (in consultation with Digital Initiatives and Collection Services), and when staff resources can be identified.

c) We are already considering the case for organization by genre and format.

d) The new access point will likely continue to be the service desk on the 4th floor of the Library, which currently services RBSC and MUA, but in the newly configured structure might service all ROAAR units.

e) We are in discussion with a conservator, who has done considerable work for us. However, given the top hiring priorities, including a University Archivist and an additional Records Management staff hire as well as other key positions in RBSC, and in consideration that conservation work can be achieved on a contract basis and by training current staff, this cannot be a top priority.