Research Commons Implementation Plan
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Executive Summary

Research commons are collaborative spaces that bring together services and resources to support researchers.   Research commons also include spaces, support, and equipment for integrating technology into teaching and research.

Target user group

Research commons focus on graduate students, faculty, and undergraduates engaged in research.

Assumptions & Constraints

- A research commons at McGill would have its physical home somewhere in the McLennan Redpath complex.
- A budget for renovating space and for purchasing equipment is limited.
- A budget for hiring staff for a Research Commons is limited.

Proposal

To develop a Research Commons that emphasizes the following: services that support researchers through the research lifecycle, collaboration with campus partners, and a space to bring together services that are already being offered in a more coordinated manner. To position the Research Commons as *the place* to go for research support.

Potential Partners

- **The Writing Centre**
  The McGill Writing Centre (MWC) offers credit courses in academic and professional writing and a tutorial service open to all McGill students and postdocs.

  Rationale: The Centre is the University's central resource for written communication. Writing is an essential part of the research lifecycle.

- **Teaching and Learning Services**
  Teaching and Learning Services strives to make McGill a community of people who love to teach and are excited to learn.

  Rationale: TLS is involved in numerous initiatives (such as the Nexus project) across the university that bring together faculty and students around the inclusion of research in the curriculum.

- **Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies**
  The mission of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (GPS) is to promote university-wide academic excellence for graduate and postdoctoral education at McGill.

  Rationale: GPS already works in collaboration with the library on the MyResearch series and with TLS on the SkillSets series and is an essential partner for services targeted to graduate students and postdocs.

- **Office of Sponsored Research**
  The Office of Sponsored Research (OSR) provides information, services and support to members of the McGill research community in their pursuit and management of funding.

  Rationale: OSR is the campus unit that assists researchers with grant applications and the management of intellectual property resulting from their research.

- **IT Services**
  IT Services delivers user-centred information systems and services to the university community.

  Rationale: Using technology to interpret, display, and manipulate elements of research will be integral to the functionality of the Commons.

Service, equipment, and program offerings

- Consultations
  - Consultations with liaison librarians
  - Consultations with copyright specialists
  - Consultations with data reference and management specialists
  - Peer tutoring in statistics
- Data Visualization Studio: a space that can display large amounts of data to allow interaction with data amongst researchers
- Makerspace with 3-D printer: a space where students and faculty can engage in cutting-edge projects and one that will foster an entrepreneurial culture at McGill
- Media Lab: a space with the software and equipment to enable students and faculty to incorporate mixed media into their assignments and research projects
- Access to software/assistance with software: one place to go to access specific software needed by researchers, for example ARCGis, Stata, Magix VideoPro, Apple Final Cut
- Flexible meeting space: technology enhanced, flexible spaces for consultations and also for collaborative work among researchers
- Teaching space: a reservable space for workshops and training programs, a place for researchers to practice presenting
- Workshops and training programs: some examples include workshops on copyright, author's rights, grant writing, research ethics, data management, thesis and presentation bootcamps, study skills, and more

- Research showcase: this display will provide a visual clue as to what the Research Commons is about and also raise the profile of research being done at McGill

The Virtual Research Commons

A strong online and social media presence will be integral to the Research Commons. Information on office hours, programming, and equipment will be important. The virtual space will also serve to promote events and training happening in the space and will highlight research outputs from the Commons. A way to connect researchers with one another will also be key element of the virtual Research Commons.

Resources required

- Office hours from liaison, data, and copyright librarians and specialists.
- Budget to hire students for peer tutoring, software, and equipment support.
- 1 FTE Research Commons Coordinator: this position would coordinate consultations, schedule and supervise peer tutors, manage workshops and training programs, provide support for equipment, and manage the Research Commons virtual presence.
- Budget to renovate a space within the Redpath-McLennan complex (see "Location").
- Budget to purchase equipment and software.
- An ongoing budget to support day to day operations.

Funding Recommendation

The Research Commons will be an innovative and noteworthy addition to the McGill campus and, as such, its creation offers an opportunity to reach out to alumni and other potential donors who may want to contribute to the realization of this idea. For a project such as this where there are individual spaces and technology that may resonate with individual donors, adopting a funding model such as the one used by Duke University for their Edge commons, in which many of the elements are named in honor of major contributors, would be viable.

Location

Space plays an important role in any research commons. Space (and a budget to renovate a space) is a significant challenge for developing a Research Commons at McGill. The working group has identified three possible locations in the Redpath-McLennan complex that could be adapted for a Research Commons.

1. The far north end of Redpath main floor. This space is already home to several meeting rooms and to a potential partner in the commons: the Writing Centre. Some work would have to be done to accommodate a data visualization room, a teaching space, and a research showcase area.

2. Any floor in McLennan (excluding the 4th). This option would require the greatest investment. To clear the floor for a commons, collections would either need to go into storage or more high density compact shelving would need to be installed. Having a larger space to work with would enable us to include everything that Option #1 includes as well as a space with a minimum of 40 seats for colloquia. This would also enable us to have more flexible seating and collaboration spaces. There would be the option of having offices for campus partners.
3. Blackader floor in Redpath. Similar to Option #2, a home would need to be found for the collection. One option would be to install more compact shelving in McLennan. Once this was removed there would be space to develop everything described in Option #1. It might also be possible to have a space for colloquia as described in Option #2.

Governance

To ensure that the commons evolves in a way that meets the needs of its target user group, the working group recommends that a Research Commons Advisory Board be established. This group should have representation from faculty, graduate students, the library, as well as campus partners.

Project timeline

- Normally an implementation plan would include a detailed timeline; however at this stage a plan can only identify some milestones:
  - The establishment of a Steering Group (to be involved in the planning of the Commons)
  - The development of partnerships and collaborative service offerings
  - The development of the Advisory Board (to be involved in the ongoing oversight of the Commons)
  - With input from stakeholders, settle on a location
  - A plan for the space
  - A plan for technology and equipment
  - Renovation/program and service planning/development of virtual commons
  - Launch Research Commons

Next Steps

- Circulate the implementation plan to McGill Library administration, staff, and Library Advisory groups for feedback and revise the plan accordingly
- Establish a Research Commons Steering Group with representation from potential campus partners
- Work with Planning and Resources to explore possible locations and develop budgets for any work to be undertaken
- Establish the Research Commons Advisory Board as described above

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