



Northeastern University

University Libraries

A Library for the 21st Century

I am pleased to announce a forthcoming initiative that will enhance the leadership role of Northeastern's Snell Library in re-envisioning library spaces for research, teaching, and learning in the 21st century. We look forward to offering to our community redesigned library floors with enriched graduate and faculty research support services, an enhanced space for University Archives and Special Collections, new collaborative and individual study spaces for graduate and undergraduate students, and increased access to electronic collections.

In 2012 and 2013, the 1st and 2nd floors of Snell Library were renovated and the library became a model for a transformed collaborative and creative space, with new technology and sophisticated audio and video facilities. In the 2015-16 report of the Library Policies and Operations Committee of the Faculty Senate (LPOC), the committee, together with the library, outlined plans for the clearing of an additional floor of stacks to allow for new scholarly and research activities and for enhanced individual and collaborative study space.

We are now excited to take the next step forward as we prepare for a further transformation and redesign of Snell Library. As this work will involve the move of a large portion of the library's collections, I wanted to provide some further details on the process and the steps we have taken to ensure that the research and learning environment is enhanced and not harmed in the process.

The Changing Environment of Library Collections

Academic libraries today are undergoing a transition from focusing on the steady accumulation of books and journals to providing a wider variety of resources, services, and vital spaces for collaborative learning. Many large libraries, including Harvard, have been storing a large portion of their collections in offsite storage for years and recalling them when requested. This is a growing trend in most large academic libraries. But even more importantly, campus libraries are encouraging and providing access to primary source materials across disciplines and are also facilitating use and sharing of their own unique collections, such as Northeastern's rich collection of community archives, historical newspapers, photographs, and documents of the Boston area.

There are several exciting developments at Northeastern and beyond which now allow us to significantly increase and enrich access to research materials even as we contemplate the reduction of physical volumes in the library building:

- Northeastern is at the forefront of offering researchers at all campuses access to a deep collection of electronic materials in all formats – books, journals, streaming video, and online primary source materials. Journal backfiles and high-use monographs are gradually being converted to electronic format as funding permits. Most new materials are acquired in electronic formats. Our collections thus support the Northeastern community on all campuses on a 24/7 basis.
- Northeastern continues to offer outstanding, swift interlibrary loan services for materials to which we do not provide access; community members are able to have most articles delivered to their desktop within 24 hours, and books from libraries across the region and the country within a few days.
- The library is a supporting member of the Eastern Academic Scholars' Trust (EAST), a new shared print program of over 50 research libraries in the East who are committed to retaining and sharing 6 million monographic holdings, representing over 4.3 million titles. A project for journal retention is underway so that all retained print journal volumes will be available to EAST members. The library is also a member of the HathiTrust large-scale digital and print repository and the Center for Research Libraries.
- To replicate and enhance the experience of serendipitous browsing of the shelves, we now offer a **Virtual Browse** feature on Scholar OneSearch. Simply click on the record for any book, journal, or media title, and you will be able to electronically browse adjacent materials in all formats by call number, right from your desktop, and in many cases directly access the full text of items on similar topics.

Data-Driven Process

In developing guidelines for the move of print collections, the library relies heavily on usage data derived from our Library Management System. We have determined that print materials on the shelves are showing trends of largely declining usage as they become significantly older and less relevant in many disciplines. It is important to note that the usage data we are consulting includes both the circulation of materials (check-out) and in-house usage of items on the shelves which are scanned as they are re-shelved.

Monographs – Over 300,000 low-use monographs older than 2013 will be moved to a Library Annex offsite. These may be easily recalled upon request and in most cases will be delivered back to Snell within two business days. Users will simply request the item

from the Scholar OneSearch interface. Books that are requested with some frequency will be re-shelved within the Snell Library building. High-use, newer materials will remain on the shelves in the library.

Journals – Our data shows that print journal volumes are very rarely requested. In-house use of journals in the stacks averaged well below 1% per classification range. Because we are able to provide electronic access to significant journal collections and to request other articles very quickly through our library networks and deliver them directly to a user's computer, print journal volumes will no longer be housed at Snell and will be reviewed regularly for usage and retention. Low-use journals will not be kept at Northeastern but will be offered to the EAST journal retention initiative. All new journal subscriptions are delivered online except in the rare case that there is no electronic equivalent.

Audio-visual formats – For high-use items, the library is converting VHS titles to DVD or streaming formats whenever possible. Offerings of streaming video have been greatly expanded for individual use and use in classrooms. For the present time, DVDs will be housed in Snell Library.

In addition to working from usage data, the Library is also taking into account the specific needs of certain disciplines whenever possible. If you have questions about specific titles or areas, please contact your subject librarian.

Timeframe

Plans are now being developed for the move of the University Archives and Special Collections to one of the upper floors. We expect that beginning in the middle of December 2017 materials will be moved out from the compact shelving in the basement and the shelving will be dismantled. Meanwhile, low-use materials on the third and fourth floors will be gradually moved out to accommodate the relocation of the Archives and the eventual expansion of faculty and graduate research support services and new individual and collaborative study space. The majority of this work will likely happen in early spring 2018.

Temporary study space will be set up once the collection moves are complete to accommodate students during this process and to make good use of freed-up space until the next phase of the renovation begins.

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We thank you in advance for bearing with us in the coming months as Snell Library once again undergoes a transformation to meet the present and future needs of our community. We will do our best to support your research, teaching, and learning in the interim.

We are excited about the end result of this process, which will lead to enhanced research and collaborative activities and services, and greater access to virtual collections of information resources for all of our campuses. I look forward to working and talking with you as our plans develop.

With thanks from all of us in the Northeastern University libraries,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Cohen', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Dan Cohen
Dean of the Libraries
Vice Provost for Information Collaboration

If you have comments or concerns about the plans outlined in this message, please feel free to contact me at d.cohen@northeastern.edu, or Amira Aaron, Associate Dean for Scholarly Resources, at a.aaron@northeastern.edu.