



The Fogg Museum Library

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THE problem of the special field of the fine arts in a university library is a perennial one and not peculiar to Harvard University. Moreover, many readers of the LIBRARY BULLETIN will already be familiar with Harvard's current solution to the problem, for it has been discussed in the library guide devoted to the subject.¹ The preface to this fine arts guide outlines some of the difficulties inherent in the materials required and in the library collections consulted by students in the course of their investigations. Those difficulties are many and involved because the field of the fine arts is so far-reaching. They are especially frustrating to the student who realizes the vast extent of the University's resources, yet recognizes also the time and the physical labor involved in the consultation of those resources. His basic, and still more his collateral, material is widely scattered — among more than six different libraries in at least six different buildings. He must surely consult the working collection in the Fogg Museum Library and the central reservoir of books on fine arts and archaeology housed in the Widener Library. Beyond these there is a bewildering array of special libraries which may be pertinent — all within the Harvard system. A number of the more important of these are enumerated below, but even a full list of Harvard resources would not cover the material available to the fine arts scholar, for Boston is so near, with the library of the Museum of Fine Arts, the Boston Athenaeum, and the Fine Arts Division of the Boston Public Library, that it must certainly be considered as part of any true picture of the problem. In addition, the whole area covered by studies in the fine arts is continually expanding.

A recent review of a book by Charles Gauss on *The Aesthetic Theories of French Artists* says that the science of art 'includes not only the history of art but also art theory and art criticism, the development and periodicity of styles and techniques, the relation of spiritual culture and material civilization (as in Jacob Burckhardt and certain Marxist thinkers) and the analysis of the creative processes themselves (as in Freud,

¹E. Louise Lucas, *Guides to the Harvard Libraries. No. 2: Fine Arts* (Cambridge, Harvard University Library, 1949).

Jung, Lévy-Brühl, Worringer), from which point of view the life of the artist, his journals, his manifestos and theories become of greater importance. 'The interrelation of the arts — as the different forms of expression of the human psyche and probably the purest sources of human experience — and the crisis of art as a symptom of the spiritual crisis of our highly mechanized life, are the latest fields of research.'²

All of this wealth of material and this growing expansion of the field of study emphasize the fact that Harvard University has no one great center for fine arts research, although it has unexcelled collections of fine arts books, photographs, and lantern slides, an outstanding fine arts museum for teaching by the most direct methods, i.e., by work with original objects, and is situated close to great centers of artistic activity. Furthermore, the problems of teaching and of library administration must differ greatly from those of institutions located, geographically, far distant from such centers.

Obviously, from this description of the problem, one of the most important aspects of library administration in the Fogg Museum Library has been that of coordination with other Harvard libraries. All comparative statistics of size, and of growth from year to year, give a false impression, for no Harvard University Library statistics present the entire holdings of the University in this fine arts field. Statistical figures for the Fogg Museum Library alone (at present some 25,000 books, 175,000 photographs, and 65,000 lantern slides) reveal only a part of the truth. Put beside comparative statistics of such great art libraries as the Frick Art Reference Library and the Metropolitan Museum Library in New York, the Art Institute Library in Chicago, or the Courtauld and Warburg Institute Library in London, they appear as the record of a rather small working collection rather than as the record of the vast research assemblage which would appear if the University's holdings could be presented as a statistical unit. To be truthful the figures would have to include all of the FA (Fine Arts) and ARC (Archaeology) classifications of the College Library, much history, literature, and philosophy, and many publications of learned societies in the art field — all housed in the Widener building. They would have to include the Fogg Museum Library, and large portions of the Peabody Museum Library, with its collections of publications on ethnology and primitive art, of the libraries of architecture, landscape architecture, and regional and city planning in the School of Design,

² *Times Literary Supplement*, 10 March 1950, p. 148.

and of the Houghton Library, with its rare illustrative material, particularly in such special fields as are represented by the Theatre Collection and the Department of Printing and Graphic Arts. The relationship of the libraries for law, business, medicine, and the biological sciences to fine arts may seem less obvious, yet actual reference records prove that many items in these libraries have played an important part in fine arts research.

One factor of great bibliographical importance is that practically all of the holdings of all of these libraries are recorded, at least by author, in the union catalogue of the Harvard University Library in Widener, and no student can do serious, constructive work without making extensive use of this comprehensive tool.

Although accurate figures of Harvard's total fine arts holdings are not available, careful and conservative estimates would place the number of fine arts and archaeological publications at a figure not less than 100,000. There is great danger in using a quantitative rather than a qualitative method to evaluate the usefulness of a library collection. It is relatively easy to estimate the number of volumes on library shelves, and easy to count the number of times that each book is charged at the circulation desk, but it is much more difficult to evaluate the usefulness of the books selected by a library in the furthering of the search for truth and knowledge. Through experience, the staff of the Fogg Museum Library cannot fail to judge, from the comments of research students, from its intimate knowledge of Harvard's library collections, and from the trend of the flow of correspondence and of inter-library loans, that Harvard University libraries have a range and an extent of fine arts material not available elsewhere in this country. This wealth of material, already available, implies the obligation to bend every effort to keep the collections as complete as funds for purchases and for services will allow.

Some libraries are so fortunate as to be able to trace their beginnings to a great patron or individual donor who foresightedly provided ample endowment for future growth and development. The library of the Fogg Art Museum owes its existence, rather, to necessity. It has grown from the demands made by the fine arts students and faculty, and the staff of the Fogg Art Museum.

There is a legend, or myth, not to be substantiated by footnote proof, that Harvard University was one of the first American institutions, if

not actually the first, to use illustrative material in the teaching of the fine arts. Certain it is that at Harvard books, photographs, and lantern slides have been considered a normal part of the teaching equipment of faculty members of the fine arts department for more than fifty years — long before such terms as visual or audio-visual education had been coined. Lantern slides were used not only in fine arts courses, but in lectures given by members of the classics department as well. Those classics department slides have, in very recent years, become a part of the Fogg Museum Library collection.

It was this teaching demand upon the resources of the Fogg Art Museum that brought about the fusion which exists today between the department of fine arts and the Fogg Art Museum. They have developed simultaneously and the ties seem to grow stronger with age. Neither would exist or function effectively without the other unless the whole concept of organization and administration were very drastically changed. The teaching function is a vital one if the Fogg Art Museum is to hold its place among museums. All of its collections, whether they be of objects for exhibition or the books, photographs, and lantern slides of its library, emphasize this thought. The opportunity for the integration of the study of original objects in the museum with that of the correlated books and photographs is one of the strongest assets of the Fogg Museum Library. Because of this relationship between museum and teaching department the library, which serves both, must at all times reflect the needs of both a teaching and a curatorial staff.

The history of the Fogg Museum Library has been, then, almost wholly linked to the history of the Fogg Art Museum. In the early days there was no independent library within the museum and, so far as this writer has discovered, there is no record of any formal establishment of a library. It grew, apparently like Topsy, from the personal interests and personal book collections of the successive museum directors and fine arts faculty members. The present library boasts of books from the libraries of Charles Eliot Norton, Charles Herbert Moore, Edward W. Forbes, Paul J. Sachs, George H. Chase, Denman W. Ross, Arthur Pope, A. Kingsley Porter, Chandler R. Post, and many other devoted members of the teaching and the museum staff.

Very little has appeared in print about the early days of the Fogg Art Museum and even less about the Fogg Museum Library. The museum itself was founded by Elizabeth Fogg in memory of her husband,

William Hayes Fogg, whose full name is incorporated in the official title of both museum and library. The original building, located on the Broadway side of the Yard, adjacent to the Memorial Church, was completed in 1895.³ In this building there was no separate library. Books and photographs were scattered through faculty and museum offices, photographs were in gallery cupboards or in office filing cabinets. It was customary, at this time, for a museum to keep a Visitors' Book, and these books⁴ were consulted in 1938 when the Fogg Art Museum was celebrating Edward W. Forbes's thirtieth anniversary as director of the museum. They revealed that in the first year that records were kept (1896/97) the study collections (i.e., the library materials of the museum) were consulted 1,145 times. Since there is no reference to, nor any indication of, the existence of a library, these visitors must have consulted material available in the offices of the museum director and his staff. In the annual report of the director of the Fogg Art Museum for the year 1915/16 there appears the statement that the museum owned 1,031 books, and in this same report mention is first made of the lending of books to students.

Increased activity in the museum and use of its facilities by the fine arts department quickly proved the inadequacy of the space available in the original building and, as the result of a vigorous campaign for necessary funds and endowment, the present Fogg Art Museum was erected in 1927, on Quincy Street at the corner of Broadway. During the campaign for funds for this new building the museum's director, Mr Forbes, wrote a pamphlet entitled *The Fine Arts in a Laboratory*, a title which might well be used as the motto for the new Fogg Museum Library which began to take shape at this time. On the twenty-seventh of June 1927, the present Fogg Art Museum was dedicated and for the first time the museum had some space devoted wholly to library purposes. For this occasion the books were gathered from staff offices and from the print room, but they still made only slight progress in filling the empty shelves of the new reading room. Although the shelves of this room may at times still look bare, the present reason is use, rather than lack, of books.

Perhaps it was by deliberate intention that in a building such as the Fogg Art Museum the architects placed the library so that it should be a traffic center for all movement through the building. If such was the

³ Now known as Hunt Hall and currently used by the School of Design.

⁴ Now deposited in the Harvard University Archives.

intent, the architects succeeded admirably, for the library receives not only the normal horizontal flow of student activity on the main floor of the building but, since it contains the only passenger elevator in the building, is also the center of all vertical movement through the building. This does, without doubt, bring the majority of museum visitors, be they students, staff, or general public, through the library. Whether or not this flow of traffic creates an atmosphere conducive to study is a debatable question. There is no question whatever that it makes the library a center of activity.

The accompanying plan of the first floor of the entire building, Figure 1, shows the relation of the library quarters to the rest of the museum. Directly opposite the front door, the main reading room occupies all of the back of the first floor. This reading room is surrounded by a balcony, for additional shelving, and beneath it are two full floors of stacks. When the building was first completed this stack space seemed so empty that all oversize portfolios in the fine arts and archaeology classifications were transferred from the Widener building. They occupy an entire stack floor, and today, when a new portfolio is added to the collection, the question is one of deciding not where it should, but where it can, be shelved. At one end of the reading room is space devoted to office quarters for the librarian and her secretary, and adjoining it is the work room for the processing of books, photographs, and lantern slides. Below this office and work space is the two-storied room, with balcony at one end, devoted to photograph files. Lantern slides, originally stored in the present office space, have, since the addition of the Naumburg wing in 1932, been more adequately housed in the large room on the first floor of this wing. This room also provides for the course use of large collections of photographs put on table racks for student consultation, just as books are put on course reserve shelves.

Photographs made for this article, shown in Plates I and II, are apparently the only ones of the library taken since the opening of the building. They are obviously not posed, but represent average use of the main reading room near the end of the academic year 1949-50.

Up to the present time the decision has been that there should be purchased by the main College Library, and housed in the Widener building, the real source material for fine arts, the periodicals and publications of learned societies, the individual monographs, and the related history, literature, and philosophy required for much of the research of

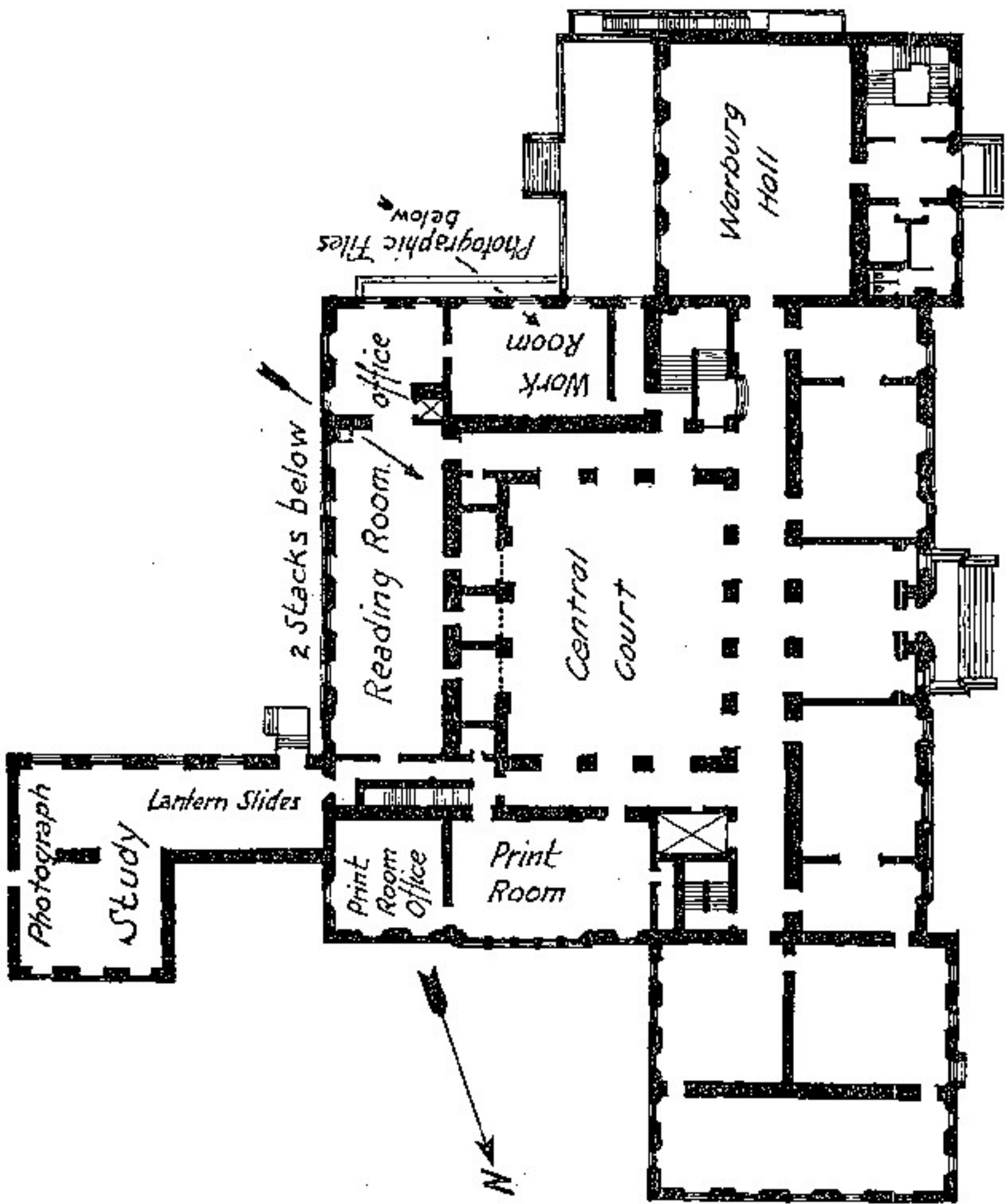


FIG. 1: FOGG ART MUSEUM, FIRST FLOOR

graduate students and faculty. The Fogg Museum Library has, in turn, as a matter of established policy bought freely for undergraduate needs, has purchased dictionaries, reference books, and the most fundamental historical and critical works, has acquired museum bulletins and reports, and has collected exhibition and auction sales catalogues which are to a large general library merely additional ephemeral material, but are, to the specialist, often the means of saving hours of search for information.

In the course of adding material of this type to the Fogg Museum Library its staff steadily recommends to the acquisition department of the main College Library additional fine arts titles which should be purchased for the University. It may be noted, conversely, that no matter what the source, or where the final resting place on the library shelves, all new purchases of books in the field and all new issues of fine arts periodicals come to the Fogg Museum Library for a brief inspection period.

Funds for the purchase of books and photographs for the Fogg Museum Library itself come chiefly from the unrestricted general funds of the Fogg Art Museum. This may often work to the disadvantage of the library, and consequently to the teaching equipment of the fine arts department, since it means that the library must compete with other activities of the museum for supporting funds and may, in times of financial stress, be the loser, with resulting detriment to the University's resources in the fine arts field. Certain factors do, however, tend to mitigate this potentially unfavorable situation. The main College Library makes available for fine arts a portion of its unrestricted purchase funds, as well as the Sumner and the Forsyth endowments left specifically for this subject. And in 1945 a bequest under the will of Arthur Tracy Cabot provided that the income from fifty thousand dollars should be used 'for the purchase of books on Fine Arts and allied subjects for the College Library and the Library of the Fogg Art Museum.'⁵ The establishment of this fund for joint use typifies the relationship of the specialized fine arts library to the main library of the University, for books may be bought for either library and may be shifted from one collection to the other as pressure of demand may require.

Gifts of books and collateral material have also contributed greatly to the present preeminence of the University in the fine arts field.

⁵ *Endowment Funds of Harvard University June 30, 1947* (Cambridge, 1948), p. 321.

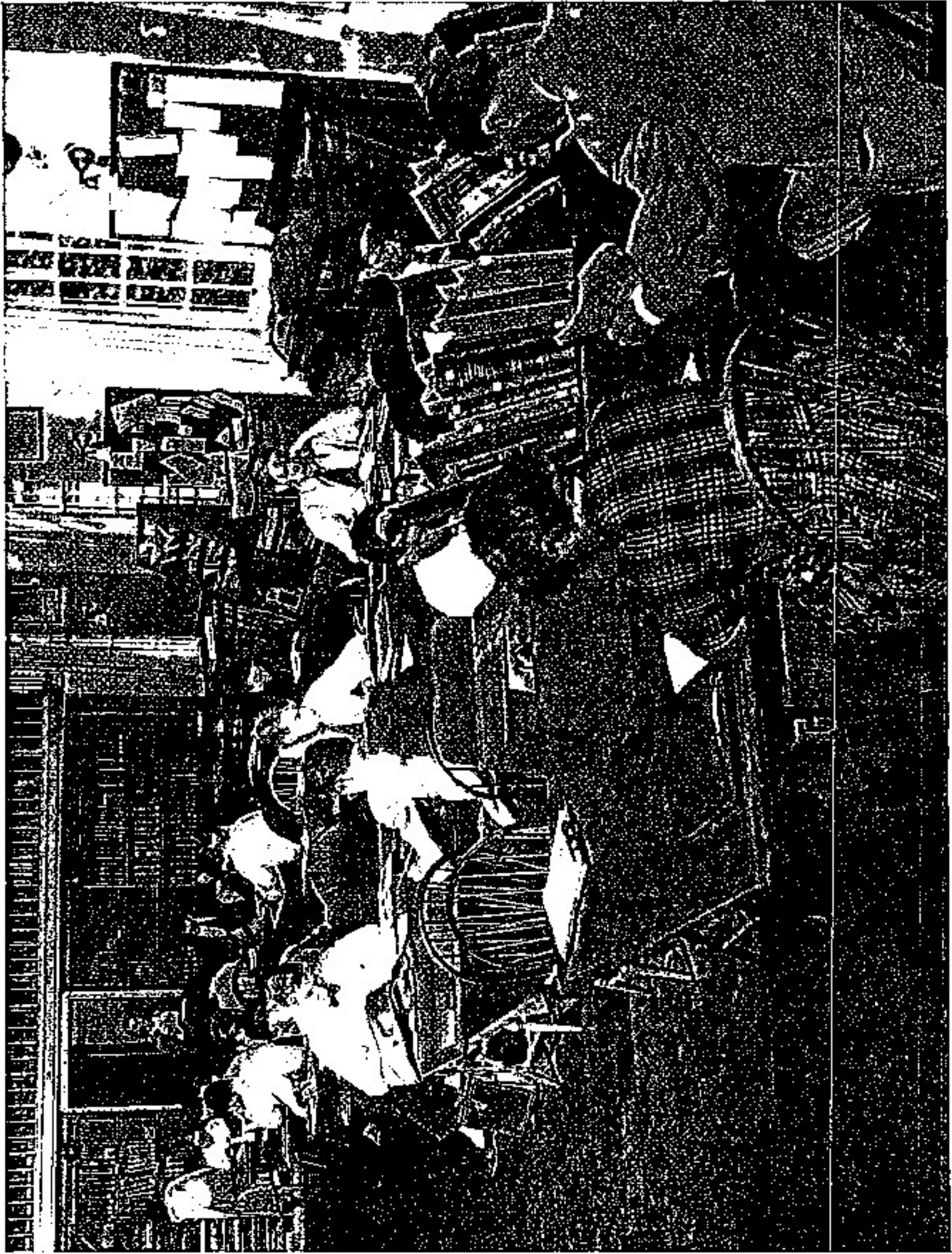


PLATE I

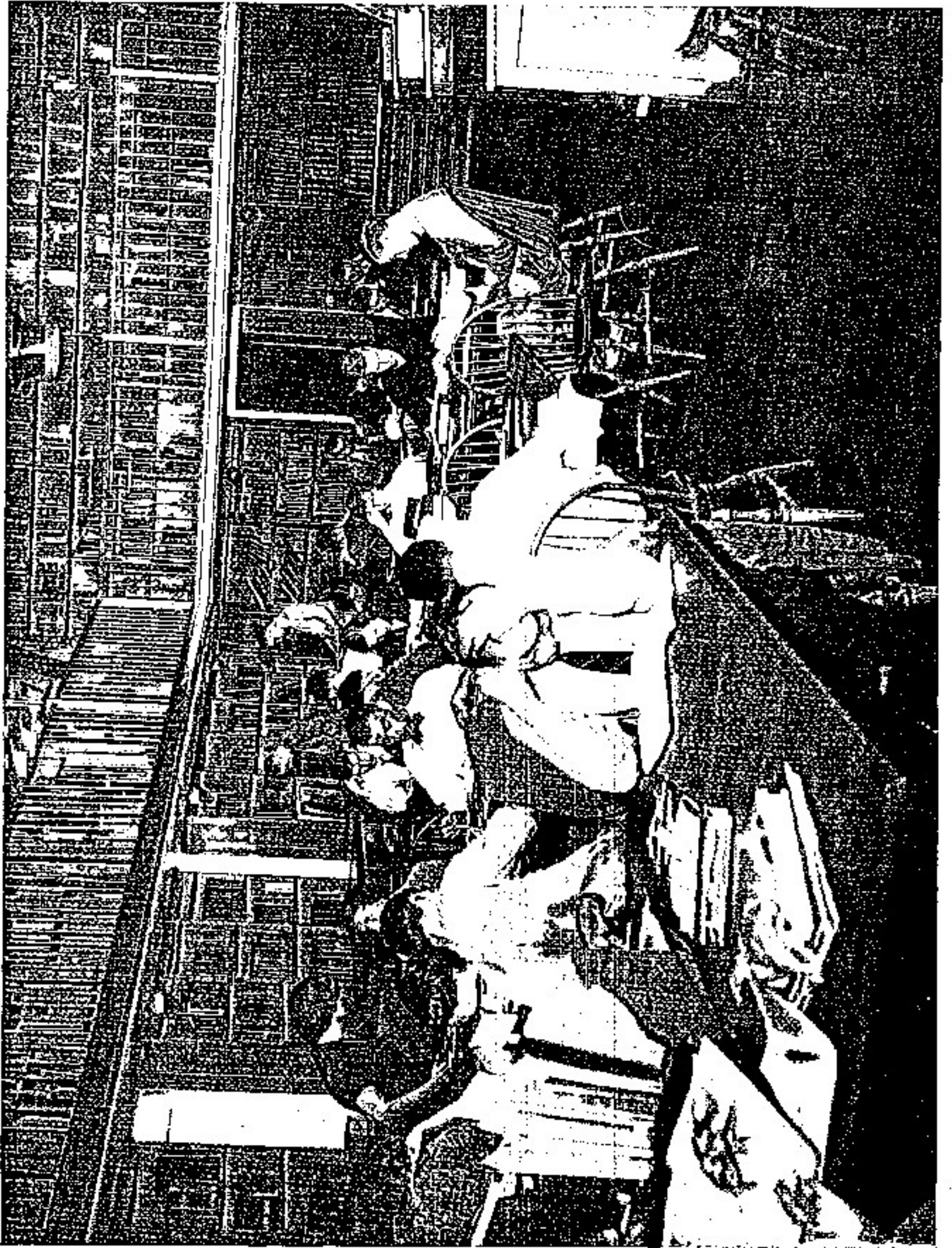


PLATE II

Among the most outstanding in recent years have been the bequest of Grenville L. Winthrop, the collection of books and photographs in the field of mediæval art belonging to A. Kingsley Porter and given to the University by his widow, and the gift by Paul J. Sachs of all books from his library at Shady Hill not already in the University libraries.

Certain special aspects of the Fogg Museum Library as a focal point for fine arts study at Harvard deserve special consideration. Because of Edward W. Forbes's interest in the field of the conservation and the restoration of paintings, a rather unusual collection of early publications in this field has found its way to the library. This collection serves to point up one of the many helpful relations that exist with other departments within the University Library system, for much similar material may be found in the chemistry and the mineralogy libraries. The chemist and other scientific workers attached to the staff of the museum require, of course, much more than fine arts material.

There is in the Fogg Art Museum an extensive collection of books and photographs relating to Oriental art: the Rubel Asiatic Research Bureau, which is administered not by the Fogg Museum Library but by the Oriental Department of the museum. Many of the texts are in the Chinese or Japanese languages. These books are recorded in the catalogue of the Fogg Museum Library and, like all Fogg Museum Library holdings, are represented as well in the union author catalogue in the Widener Library building.

One of the outstanding collections of the Fogg Art Museum has been that of the department of drawings, built up through the skill, the knowledge, and the devoted interest of Paul J. Sachs, who was until recently the associate director of the Fogg Art Museum and is now its honorary curator of drawings. The great extent of this collection of drawings is reflected in the Fogg Museum Library's unusually large collection of reproductions of drawings, both in facsimiles and in photographs. The library has indexed, for example, such large collections of reproductions as those published by the Vasari Society and the Prestel-Gesellschaft.

The print department of the Fogg Art Museum is physically adjacent to the library and such juxtaposition makes readily available an easy exchange of information and services between the two departments. Although the library may often be of help in the preparation of an

exhibition or of an exhibition catalogue, it often benefits, in turn, from the print collection in its search for illustrative material.

For a working library in the field of fine arts, a collection of photographs and its related collection of lantern slides are obviously of basic importance. The holdings of the Fogg Museum Library at present total over 175,000 catalogued photographs and nearly 65,000 lantern slides, recorded in an illustrated card catalogue. About ten years before the move into the new museum building the decision was made to reclassify the entire collection of photographs (then about 47,000) and the collection of slides (then about 13,000). As a result of this decision, the cataloguing staff was necessarily enlarged, and at the time of the opening of the new building this cataloguing staff occupied the lower floor where the photograph files now are, while the entire photograph collection of that date could be housed comfortably in the small space now occupied by the present small staff. All reclassification and recataloguing were finished by 1932. Since that date current accessions only have increased the collections to their present size.

For a period of five years, approximately between 1930 and 1935, an annual gift of \$10,000 from John Nicholas Brown made it possible for the Fogg Museum Library to buy photographs by the most advantageous method — i.e., in large block purchases. Instead of buying one by one with the concomitant high expense of individual handling, it was possible, for example, for the library to acquire all photographs from the great loan exhibitions of Italian, French, Flemish, and Dutch art held during those years in Burlington House by the Royal Academy. In this way the library acquired much material from private collections — material which would have been very difficult, if not impossible, to obtain piecemeal. Such funds made it possible to purchase the great collection of French architectural photographs made under the direction of Clarence Ward, of Oberlin, and, with the advice of Chandler R. Post, to send photographers into the remote sections of Spain. As a result of the latter activity the Fogg Museum Library now possesses one of the finest archives of Spanish photographs available anywhere in the world.⁶ It has been, of course, natural that the greatest activity in acquisition should be in the fields of special interest to those research scholars in fine arts working at Harvard. Here it has been possible for the library staff to secure expert help and advice at every point.

⁶ Ruth S. Magurn, 'Collection of Spanish Photographs in the Fogg Museum,' *Fogg Museum Bulletin*, V (1935), pp. 12-15.

The photograph collection is once again outgrowing its space, and measures are now being taken to reduce the size of the mount used for each photograph. As quickly as funds can be made available for new cases, transfer is being made to new equipment, with a resulting saving of at least one third in necessary filing and floor space to house the collection. Could it be measured as accurately, the saving of library staff strength and temper would be much greater.

But not all problems of space or of access are as readily provided with at least a partial solution. Because of the interdependence of all of the departments in the Fogg Art Museum, and because of the use made of all of them by fine arts students in both Harvard and Radcliffe, without discrimination, it was not considered wise to concentrate the undergraduate fine arts books in the Lamont Library. Therefore, with the widening interests of the programs in general education and the humanities, it was inevitable that the main reading rooms of the Fogg Museum Library should become increasingly active and correspondingly less favorable for the more quiet researches of the advanced student. There are now, moreover, only five studies in the Fogg Museum Library available for assignment to a graduate group averaging, in recent years, from forty-five to fifty students. Nearly all of these students must request additional space assignment in the Widener building in order to make effective use of their necessary materials.

The combination of crowded working conditions with greater and greater diffusion of material in widely separated collections is the penalty paid everywhere for expansion, and Harvard is no exception. As indicated at the beginning of this article, the number of places where a student may have to search for a book is large, confusing, and constantly growing. Many graduate students look nostalgically toward days spent in such libraries as that of the Warburg Institute, where they could have all of the material in their special field readily available, with experienced service always at hand.

It is clear that libraries at Harvard must seek to amalgamate large fields where possible and to coordinate, to a much greater degree than in the past, all facilities which do exist.⁷ Yet the continual expansion of needs and of material, in conjunction with the inevitable physical limi-

⁷ In this connection it may be noted that all books, photographs, and lantern slides once in the Germanic Museum (now the Busch-Reisinger Museum) have already been incorporated in the collections of the Widener or of the Fogg Museum Libraries.

tations of space, makes it increasingly difficult to decide where new acquisitions should be housed.

The Fogg Museum Library attempts, through its catalogues, to coordinate as much of this material as possible, but demands made upon its present staff are too heavy to make this effort as effective as it could, and as it should, be. And catalogues, no matter how serviceable, are hardly an adequate substitute for relatively convenient access to the books themselves.

Without answer, but in the hope of a satisfactory solution, the questions rise spontaneously. Might it be more advantageous, and less expensive, to maintain within Harvard University one centralized collection of fine arts books, housed with its correlative collections of photographs and lantern slides, and administered as a single unit? Might the Fogg Museum Library, embodying a collection so housed and so administered, achieve the satisfactions and the telling results of a truly great research center for the fine arts?

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