



# The administrative structure of the Harvard University Library

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# The Administrative Structure of the Harvard University Library

**T**HIS article is an attempt at brief description of the present administrative structure of the Harvard University Library; it will not trace the historical background of the organization that now prevails. A comparable description was published during 1943, and may be of interest to anyone who cares to survey the changes produced by the past ten years.<sup>1</sup>

The text that follows will adhere, as closely as seems practicable, to the chart on page 7, and will clothe that skeleton to some extent, but it should be emphasized that, although words can describe administrative relationships more accurately than lines, a summary of this kind must deal largely in generalities and leave out the exceptions, personalities, customs, and similar factors that may sometimes be as important as any provision of the statutes but cannot be defined in a reasonably short statement.

At the top of the chart is an electorate composed of those who have received any degree from Harvard. Only those upon whom an A.M. or an honorary degree is conferred may vote immediately; all others must wait until the fifth election following receipt of their first Harvard degree, and officers of government and instruction in the University are disenfranchised until they become *emeriti*. At each annual election the voters choose five Overseers, who serve for a term of six years; consequently there are thirty members who, with the President and the Treasurer of the University *ex officio*, constitute the Board of Overseers. As a means of keeping itself informed, the Board now has more than forty visiting committees. One of these is assigned to the University Library, and most of the rest are concerned with schools, departments, or other divisions of Harvard that maintain libraries. The chairman of each visiting committee must be an Overseer, but most of the persons serving on a committee usually are not members of the Board.

<sup>1</sup> Edwin E. Williams, 'The Administrative Organization of the Harvard University Library,' *College and Research Libraries*, IV (1942/43), 218-227.

The Board of Overseers is the University's supreme authority, but does not administer or initiate legislation; it is a board of review, for, as provided by the Charter Appendix that was passed by the General Court of the Colony on 23 October 1657, 'the corporation shall be responsible vnto, & those orders & by lawes shall be alterable by, the ouerseers according to their discretion.'<sup>2</sup>

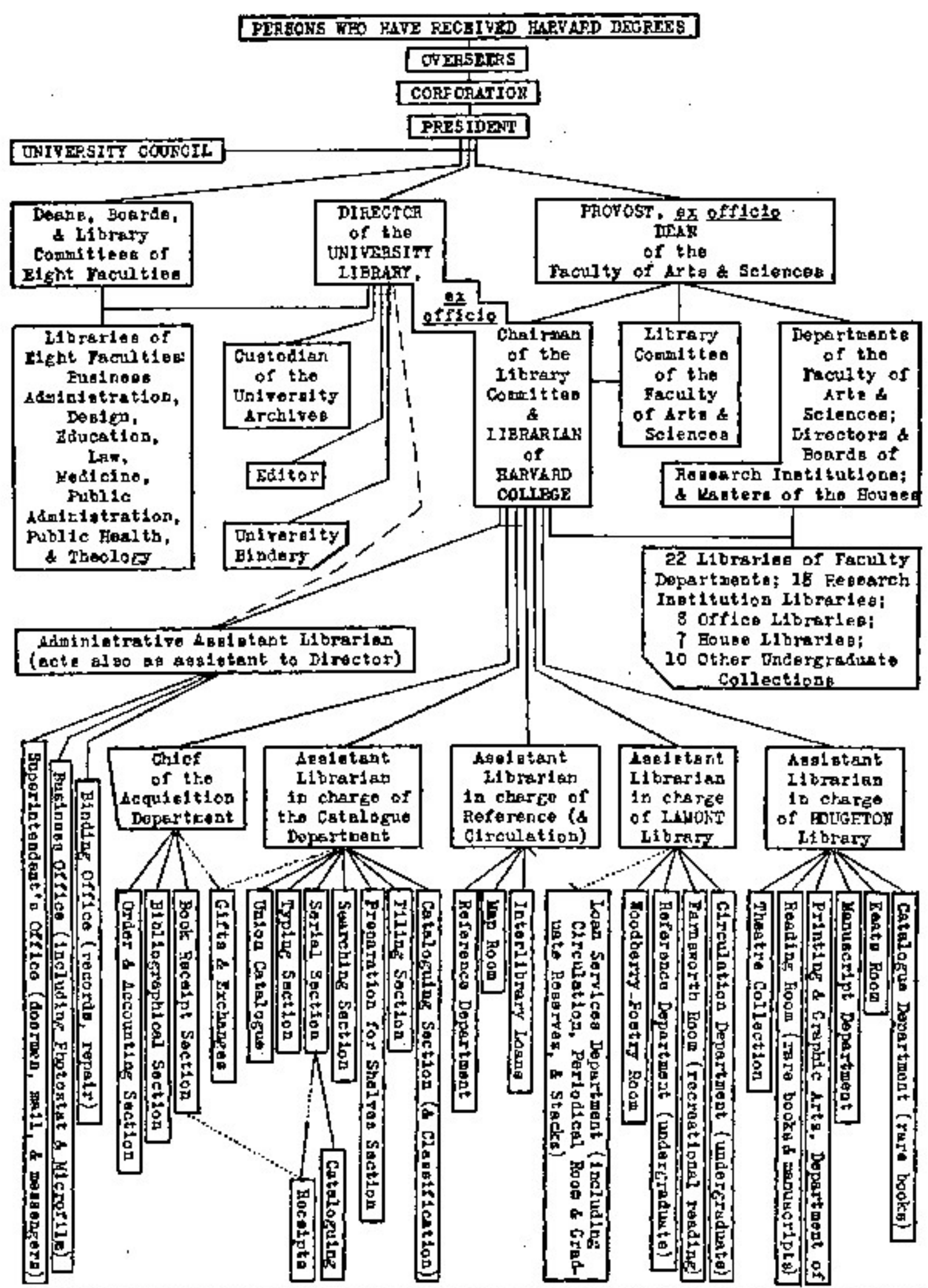
The Corporation, therefore, is Harvard's governing body in the usual sense of that term. It is composed of five Fellows, the President of the University, and the Treasurer, and, in the terms of the Charter, has 'perpetuall succession'; subject, of course, to the consent of the Overseers, it elects a successor whenever one of its members resigns, retires, or dies. All officers of instruction and administration appointed for more than one year are appointed by the Corporation with the consent of the Overseers. It should be noted that, while officers of instruction are subject to removal 'only for grave misconduct or neglect of duty' if appointed without limitation of time, administrative officers may be removed from office by the Corporation 'whenever, in its opinion, their duties are not satisfactorily discharged.'

The President is directed by the Statutes to 'act as the ordinary medium of communication between the Corporation and the Overseers, and between the Corporation and the Faculties'; he is *ex officio* the presiding officer of each Harvard faculty. He also presides over the University Council, which consists of all Harvard professors and certain other officials; its function is 'to consider questions which concern more than one Faculty, and questions of University policy,' but it has not met frequently.

There are nine faculties. The Provost of the University is *ex officio* Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, which has under its immediate charge both Harvard College and the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences; the eight other faculties also have their deans, administrative boards, libraries, library committees, and librarians.

The University Library consists of all the collections of books in the possession of the University, and the Statutes provide that the Director of the University Library shall be *ex officio* a member of each library committee, that the chief librarian of each collection shall annually make a report to him, and that he shall 'visit and inspect' these libraries.

<sup>2</sup> This quotation, like those from the Statutes that follow, is taken from the preliminary pages of the annual *Catalogue* of the University.



(Note: strictly horizontal lines show those relationships that are primarily advisory; dotted lines indicate either a temporary relationship or a division of responsibility.)



## THE LIBRARIES OF THE EIGHT PROFESSIONAL-SCHOOL FACULTIES

It should be emphasized that a faculty committee directs the administration of each of the professional-school libraries, makes the rules for its use, and directs the purchase of books; the Director of the University Library is not the chief administrative officer of these libraries. Indeed, since the present Director was trained for general library work and, as Librarian of Harvard College, has the large and complex general collections of the University directly under his supervision, he would think it absurd to try, on the side, to administer the Harvard Law School Library with its three-quarters of a million volumes in a field of which he knows relatively little.

Even if he had encyclopaedic knowledge, it would be physically impossible for the Director to administer the professional-school libraries satisfactorily; fortunately, however, his function is to serve as a coordinating and advisory officer. He can be called upon for advice or help when technical questions or staff problems arise and, either by invitation or on his own initiative, can at any time discuss administrative matters with any of the chief librarians. The Director is also in a position to consult the dean of any faculty or to go directly to the Provost or to the President when he feels that any problem calls for special consideration. He receives a copy of the budget of each library and is free to comment on it to the dean or librarian concerned, or to the President.

This is not the place for a discussion of the philosophy of departmental or special libraries, which, it is hoped, can be treated in a later issue of the BULLETIN, but the Director would like to record here his conviction that the situation as regards such libraries at Harvard is at least as satisfactory as in any other large American university. There may be theoretical objections, but the Harvard system works and, the Director believes, enables him to give more genuine help to the librarians of the professional-school libraries than would be given if the University Library were more closely centralized.

The libraries of these eight faculties, it should be noted, contain nearly thirty-five per cent of the books in the University Library.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> The names of Harvard libraries and the number of volumes and pamphlets possessed by each are given in the annual *Catalogue* of the University and in the *Annual Report* of the Director. Research resources and book-selection problems and procedures throughout the University were recently summarized by Keyes D. Metcalf and Edwin E. Williams in 'Harvard's Book Collections,' HARVARD LIBRARY

The Law School Library, with a collection more than twice as large as any of the others, has approximately forty regular employees; in addition to a Treasure Room staff it has departments for Acquisitions, Binding, Cataloguing, and Circulation. The Baker Library of the Graduate School of Business Administration has a staff nearly as large as the Law School Library; its departments are Acquisition, Cataloguing, Circulation, Collating and Binding, and Reference, and there are special divisions to handle manuscripts, corporate records, and a collection on aviation.

The staffs of the other libraries, each consisting of from two to twelve full-time employees, are small enough to require little formal departmentalization. However, the Medical Library, which serves both the Faculty of Medicine and the Faculty of the School of Public Health, has five branch libraries. One of these is the Library of the School of Dental Medicine, which has no separate faculty of its own but, like the Medical School, comes under the Faculty of Medicine. The others, which are also supervised by the Librarian of the Medical Library, are the Anatomical, Bowditch (physiology and biology), Lucien Howe (ophthalmology), and Magrath (legal medicine) libraries.

Two separate collections, each with its own librarian, are maintained by the Faculty of Design — the Architecture Library and the Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning Library. Legally, something less than half of the Divinity School's library belongs to Harvard, for the remainder, though it has been shelved with Harvard's books since 1911, is the property of the Andover Theological Seminary. The Graduate School of Education maintains a smaller library than the other professional schools, as it has transferred to Widener most of the historical material in its field and can house little more than a working collection in Lawrence Hall.

The Graduate School of Public Administration is unique because each member of its faculty is also a member in full standing of some other faculty of the University. Its library was organized at a time when the Widener building was seriously overcrowded, and large collections of public documents were transferred to it from the College Library. There has always been close coordination between Widener and the library in Littauer, which is supported in part by funds from

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BULLETIN, V (1951), 51-62, 209-220, 'Acquisition Policies of the Harvard Library,' *HLB*, VI (1952), 15-26, and 'Book Selection for the Harvard Library,' *HLB*, VI (1952), 193-201.

the general collection's budget. Five seminar or committee collections in the Littauer building are administered under the direction of professors but supervised to some extent by the assistant in charge of the Graduate School of Public Administration Library.

In concluding this statement on the libraries of the professional-school faculties, it should be added that they, like all other Harvard libraries, are free to call upon the College Library (i.e., the Widener staff) to purchase and to catalogue books for them. The smaller units occasionally make some use of these services. All the libraries in question contribute cards for their acquisitions to the Union (or Official) Catalogue in Widener, which is a nearly complete author list of all books in the University Library<sup>4</sup> and provides information on holdings by telephone.

#### OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DIRECTOR

The Harvard University Archives are housed in the Widener building at present and are a charge against the College Library budget, but they serve all faculties and their Custodian, in practice, is an officer of the University who deals with administrative authorities of the various faculties in regard to archival matters just as the Director does on questions of library policy.

The Editor, who happens to have his office in the Houghton Library, is also attached to the College Library for budgetary purposes, but the *BULLETIN* and other publications he edits are issued on behalf of the Harvard Library as a whole.

The University Bindery is not a part of the Library, but the Director is in general charge of it, and its manager reports to him. The services of the Bindery are available to all libraries and individuals connected with Harvard, but no library is required to have its binding done there.

It has not seemed necessary to complicate the accompanying chart by trying to make it indicate Harvard's relationship to the New England Deposit Library, which is operated by Harvard and nine other research institutions in the Boston area as a cooperative libraries' library for the storage of little-used materials. Its governing board represents the participating libraries; the Director has served as Vice-President and — because Harvard rents more space and is nearer to Brighton than any of the other members — as its executive officer.

<sup>4</sup> The House libraries and a few others that consist almost entirely of duplicates of books in the general collections are not represented there.



## LIBRARIES AFFILIATED WITH THE FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

The Director of the Harvard University Library is *ex officio* Librarian of Harvard College, so it is a theoretical rather than a practical question as to whether the Director or the Librarian is responsible for the Archives, the Editor, the University Bindery, or the New England Deposit Library. Likewise, though it is technically the Librarian who deals with the special libraries that are to be considered hereafter, the Librarian's relations with most of them are remarkably similar to those of the Director with the libraries of the eight professional-school faculties.

One group of special libraries is described in the *Catalogue* as 'affiliated with the Faculty of Arts and Sciences,' and the most important collections of this kind are those that belong to research institutions. The Statutes specify that 'The Provost of the University, who shall be *ex-officio* Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, shall have under his general charge the following museums, libraries, and institutions for advanced study and research, and such others as may from time to time be designated by the Governing Boards, and he shall make an annual report to the President . . .'

Not all of the institutions are specified in the Statutes. Two, indeed, are legally the property of separate corporations, but the Provost, as Chairman of the Administrative Committee of the Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection (Washington, D. C.) and as a Trustee of the Harvard-Yenching Institute, is concerned with both. In any case, all are regarded in practice as coming within the provisions of the paragraph of the Statutes dealing with the College Library, which specifies: 'The Collection known as the Harvard College Library is for the general use of the whole University, but as it is in a special sense the Library of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, it is included as a sub-department of that Faculty under the Provost of the University. With it are included for administrative purposes the special libraries belonging to the Department of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences as well as the libraries of the various institutions for advanced study and research which are under the Provost of the University.'

The Library Committee of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, of which the Librarian is *ex officio* Chairman, is intended to represent that Faculty in advising the Librarian and the Provost on questions affecting the special libraries, but it has been more actively concerned with the



general collections of the College Library (Widener, Houghton, and Lamont), and will be considered in the section of this article that deals with those collections.

Eight libraries belong to research institutions in the field of biology — the Arnold Arboretum at Jamaica Plain, the Atkins Garden and Research Laboratory at Soledad (Cuba), the Farlow Library and Herbarium, the Gray Herbarium, the Harvard Forest at Petersham, the Museum of Comparative Zoology, the Oakes Ames Library of Economic Botany, and the Oakes Ames Orchid Library.

Seven libraries belong to the five remaining research institutions. The Astronomical Observatory has one library at the Boyden Station in Bloemfontein (South Africa) and a second in Cambridge, the latter with a small branch at the Oak Ridge Station. The Blue Hill Meteorological Observatory maintains a working collection in Milton but has had to transfer part of its library to Cambridge because of space problems. The Fogg Museum has a special collection for the Rubel Asiatic Research Bureau in addition to its Fine Arts Library, which is heavily used by both graduate and undergraduate students. The Mineralogical Museum has a valuable research collection, and the Peabody Museum Library is outstanding nationally in its field of archaeology and ethnology.

It is evident that the research institutions have highly specialized libraries, and their locations include South Africa, Cuba, the District of Columbia, and several Massachusetts towns other than Cambridge. The Librarian of Harvard College can offer help and advice, but would not wish to administer these collections if he could; whether acting as Director or as Librarian he believes in the policy that he has sometimes termed 'coordinated decentralization.'

Eight small collections that the *Catalogue* lists as 'office libraries' are also classified with those affiliated with the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. They are a miscellaneous group — two serve special research projects, the Study of Adult Development and the Russian Research Center; one is for the use of the Nieman Fellows; one for visiting preachers; and one for patients in the Stillman Infirmary. The Medical Adviser's Office and the Department of Physical Training have libraries, and the Schofield collection for visiting professors is not in use at present. The office libraries are operated by professors, secretaries, and other employees, none of whom are full-time librarians.

## SPECIAL LIBRARIES OF THE FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

The Committee on International and Regional Studies and sixteen regular departments or divisions of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences maintain working or research libraries. Other departments — Anthropology, Architectural Sciences, Astronomy, Biophysical Chemistry, Far Eastern Languages, Fine Arts, Geology and Geography, Government, and Mineralogy and Petrography — might need such libraries if they were not served by the collections of professional-school faculties or research institutions; but still others — Celtic, Comparative Literature, Economics, History, and Slavic — seem to have found the general collection of the College Library sufficient for their needs.

The libraries of the departments vary considerably in size and in research value, though none is so outstanding as some of the special libraries mentioned earlier in this article. The collections for Applied Science,<sup>5</sup> Biology, Chemistry, and Physics<sup>6</sup> cover subjects in which Widener collects very little, but the Biological Laboratories Library of the Department of Biology largely duplicates holdings of the research institutions in its field, and each of the others, while it is Harvard's major library in its subject, is overshadowed to some extent by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Library. In Mathematics, Music (for which the Music Department also has the separate Isham Library of Early Instrumental Music), Philosophy, Psychology, and Social Relations, the libraries of the departments have less material than Widener but supplement the general collection in some measure.

The libraries of the remaining departments — Classics, English, Germanic Languages and Literatures, Linguistics, Romance Languages and Literatures, Sanskrit and Indian Studies, and Semitic Languages and Literatures — are located in rooms on the top floor of Widener, and are supervised on behalf of the Librarian by the Assistant Librarian in charge of Widener reference services. For the most part, these collections provide graduate students with additional copies of books that are to be found in the stacks beneath.

Administrative responsibility for some of the departmental libraries has been delegated to the College Library, and all the materials added

<sup>5</sup>In addition to its Gordon McKay Library of Engineering (including Sanitary Engineering), the Applied Science Division has a Computation Laboratory Library and a Mining and Metallurgy Library.

<sup>6</sup>The Physics Department maintains both the Physics Research and the Nuclear Laboratory Libraries.

to several of them are ordered and catalogued by the Widener staff. No charge is made for these services, but costs of acquisitions and all other expenses of these libraries are paid by the departments to which they belong, not by the College Library. Their librarians are appointed either by the Librarian of Harvard College with the approval of the department or by the department with his approval.

In addition, there are ten special libraries primarily for the use of undergraduates. Three — for astronomy, biochemical sciences, and classics — are tutorial collections, and three others — for astronomy, geography, and physics — are laboratory libraries. Small libraries are maintained in connection with the instruction offered in military and in naval science, and the Modern Language Center supplies books for students in the relatively elementary language courses. Since the course known as 'English A' is no longer to be given, the future of its special library is uncertain. Like the office libraries, these undergraduate collections are staffed by part-time employees.

#### HOUSE LIBRARIES

Each of the seven Houses in which Sophomores, Juniors, and Seniors live has a library of from 11,000 to 14,000 volumes that are intended to provide general reading and material for tutorial work. These libraries belong to the Faculty of Arts and Sciences but, unlike the others that have been mentioned, are not special libraries in content. The librarian of each House, usually a resident graduate student, supervises a small staff of student assistants and reports to a library committee of his own House; he is selected jointly by the House Master and the Librarian of Harvard College. The latter must formally approve all bills, though each of the libraries is supported by funds of its own House. Much of the responsibility for advising and generally supervising the House libraries has been delegated to one of the members of the Lamont Library staff. It may be noted that the Freshmen, who live in the Yard and eat at the Union, normally pass Lamont several times a day, and now have no separate library of their own.

#### GENERAL COLLECTIONS OF THE COLLEGE LIBRARY

According to the Statutes, it has been seen, 'The collection known as the Harvard College Library is for the general use of the whole



University.' This collection now occupies three buildings and part of a fourth; its manuscripts and rare books (with the exception of those in the Harry Elkins Widener Memorial Rooms) are in the Houghton Library; a general collection intended to provide for normal undergraduate needs is housed in the Lamont Library; the main collection is in the Widener building, and infrequently used volumes belonging to it are stored across the Charles in the New England Deposit Library.

The Library Committee of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences has already been mentioned because it shares with the Librarian responsibility for advising the Provost on problems involving the special libraries that belong to the Faculty or are affiliated with it. This Committee is appointed by the President on the recommendation of the Provost, and the Librarian is *ex officio* its Chairman. It makes the rules for Widener, Houghton, and Lamont, covering such matters as hours of opening, use of the collections, restrictions on circulation, fines, and smoking. Much of its work is done with the help of sub-committees, which study problems that have come before the group and report back to it. One standing sub-committee is responsible for consideration of general policies affecting the budget; budgetary details, of necessity, are left to the Librarian. Likewise, the Library Committee is responsible for general book-selection policies. Members represent a variety of departments, and the Committee serves to give the Provost and the Librarian the benefit of Faculty advice on many problems that could not very profitably be discussed at the monthly meetings of the whole Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

Earlier sections of this article emphasized that the Director is primarily an adviser and consultant, but indicated that he is also the officer to whom the Custodian of the University Archives, the Editor, and the Manager of the University Bindery are directly responsible. Six department heads report to the same individual in his capacity as Librarian of Harvard College — the Administrative Assistant Librarian, the Assistant Librarians in charge of Houghton Library, Lamont Library, Reference Services, and the Catalogue Department, and the Chief of the Acquisition Department.

The Administrative Assistant Librarian, though technically an officer of the College Library, is also, as indicated by the chart, in practice an assistant to the Director. He handles a large share of routine administrative work for both the College and the University Library, is in charge of personnel work throughout the general collections, and

supervises preparation of the budget. In addition, three offices report to him — the Binding Office, which prepares and records material that is sent to the University Bindery and does repair work itself; the Business Office, which handles payrolls, orders supplies for the general collections, and includes the Library's photostat and microfilm services; and the office of the Superintendent of the Building, who is responsible for mail distribution and messenger services, shipping, and the Widener inspection desks.

The Assistant Librarian in charge of the Houghton Library directs book selection and ordering in his library's field, though payment of bills and accounting are handled by the Acquisition Department in Widener. The six assistants who report directly to him supervise rare book cataloguing, the Keats Room, manuscripts, the Department of Printing and Graphic Arts, the Houghton reading room, and the Theatre Collection.

The Assistant Librarian in charge of the Lamont Library is also responsible for book selection for his own building, but purchases normally are made through Widener and cataloguing is done there. Reference and circulation are the two departments in Lamont, and there are in addition two special collections, the Farnsworth (recreational reading) Room and the Woodberry Poetry Room, both of which are at present supervised by the same Curator. One of the assistants in Lamont, as has been noted, helps to advise and oversee the seven House libraries as deputy for the Librarian of Harvard College. Coordination of the public services in Lamont and Widener is attempted, and at present the Assistant Librarian in charge of Lamont directs the Loan Services Department in Widener.

The Assistant Librarian in charge of reference services in Widener would normally be responsible also for loan services there. Under him are the Reference Department, the Inter-Library Loan Section, and the Winsor Memorial Map Room. His duties also include planning and direction of Widener exhibits, assignments of stalls and studies, and supervision of those libraries of departments of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences that are located in Widener.

The Assistant Librarian in charge of the Catalogue Department is responsible for the information service provided at the Union Catalogue and for six sections whose functions are cataloguing, filing, the preparation of material for the shelves, searching, serials, and typing. The Cataloguing Section, under the Head Cataloguer, is further subdivided

into a General Cataloguing Unit, a Classification Unit, and a Special Cataloguing Unit, which handles cooperative cataloguing, Hebrew and Russian materials, and the Theodore Roosevelt Collection. The Serial Section is divided into two units, one for cataloguing and one for recording receipts. The latter unit shares a room with the Book Receipt Section of the Acquisition Department, and one of its assistants is on the budget of that department. There is also a satisfactory though somewhat indistinct division of responsibility between Catalogue and Acquisition Departments in the field of gifts and exchanges. Acknowledgment of gifts and negotiation of exchanges would seem theoretically to belong with acquisition work, but the assistant in charge of these activities serves also as secretary to the Assistant Librarian in charge of the Catalogue Department, and handles Slavic exchanges under his direct supervision as he represents the Library in dealing with professors in that area. This assistant works closely with the Acquisition Department on other exchange matters. Gifts are sorted and searched by members of the Catalogue Department.

The Chief of the Acquisition Department, in addition to the partial responsibilities for serial receipts and exchanges that have just been noted, is in charge of Bibliographical, Book Receipt, and Order and Accounting Sections. The Bibliographer supervises the checking that must be done to make sure that items suggested for purchase are not already in the Library, helps with book selection, and deals with many of the professors who recommend acquisitions. The sole 'book selection officer' of the Library, with the title, Subject Specialist in English Literature, is a member of the Acquisition Department in this capacity, but the same individual is also Curator of the Farnsworth and Poetry Rooms and teaches a course in General Education. Selection of dealers, assignment of funds, processing bills for payment, and bookkeeping are responsibilities of the Executive Assistant in the Department.

In theory, it has been seen, the Librarian gives orders only to the six officers whose departments have been described in the preceding paragraphs and, as Director, actually 'directs' three officials (or four, if one counts the Librarian of the New England Deposit Library). In practice, he gives few orders to anyone and confers with many staff members in addition to those who report directly to him; he administers the Library largely by means of consultation, and many of the policy decisions are reached by informal committees called together to study special problems. Such a committee consists of those senior members



of the staff who are chiefly concerned with the subject in question or are particularly competent to consider it; during the past year, when reassignments of space and changes in the catalogues were major problems, an informal planning committee of twelve met weekly with the Librarian. The five Assistant Librarians ordinarily meet together at luncheon at least every other week during the academic year.

The Director-Librarian and three of the Assistant Librarians are members of the Faculty; those whose titles appear on the chart hold Corporation appointments as officers of administration. In all, there are some thirty-five such appointees throughout the University Library; but only two of these are women, and it should be emphasized that many high-ranking members of the Library staff are not, technically, officers. Fortunately the distinction between officer and employee of the University is largely a formal one, and does not determine salaries.

It is hoped that the chart accompanying this article will serve as an adequate recapitulation of much of the foregoing description of the Library's administrative structure. No attempt will be made to argue that this structure is either theoretically or practically ideal; many changes have been made in the past, and many more are sure to come in the future. Looking back to the conclusions that were reached and the hopes that were expressed ten years ago, it appears that satisfactory results have been achieved in reducing the number of units that report directly to the Librarian, but the decade has not brought a projected consolidation of some of the scientific libraries into a collection that would promise to reduce duplication of material and to provide better service than can be given by small units. The Director is glad to reaffirm his belief in the theory of coordinated decentralization under which Harvard's great special libraries have been accumulated with the help of specialists on the Faculty. Finally, it can still be asserted that flexibility is essential. Each department, like the University to which it belongs, must adjust itself to a constantly changing environment, so, though a pyramid may be admirably monumental and durable, living and adaptable organisms seem to offer better models for the Library's administrative structure.

KEYES D. METCALF  
EDWIN E. WILLIAMS

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