



Among Harvard's Libraries: Concrete poetry, the library, and undergraduates

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Citation	Carpenter, Kenneth E. 1992. Among Harvard's Libraries: Concrete poetry, the library, and undergraduates. Harvard Library Bulletin 3 (2), Summer 1992: 5-6.
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Among Harvard's Libraries

CONCRETE POETRY, THE LIBRARY, AND UNDERGRADUATES

I did not go to Harvard. And even if I had, the young man who was me, would not have made the most of Harvard's educational opportunities. But then, perhaps Harvard did not have such opportunities in the fifties. Maybe no institution did. And maybe we students of the fifties were so constructed that we could not have taken advantage of them anyway.

Today it's different. New technology increases the range of opportunities. Advanced labs and greater libraries also play a role, as does Harvard's outstanding faculty. Opportunities do not, however, exist, unless there is an ability to perceive them, and today's students exhibit a willingness, even eagerness, to take advantage of what Harvard has to offer. At least that's how it seems to this observer, peering out from his niche in Widener.

There's a spirit in the air that celebrates the new. It finds alluring the technology that reduces scholarly drudgery and increases the time for reading, writing, and thinking. It welcomes new research with new kinds of materials. Today's spirit permits asking different questions from those of the past—often by people whose skin color or gender or ethnic background formerly kept them from asking any questions at all.

This issue of the *Harvard Library Bulletin* is a concrete expression of the spirit that fosters the fullest possible use of the resources offered by the university.

To offer a course in concrete poetry was adventuresome for the instructor, and it was daring of the students to take it. No mere careerists they! Available for the course were library resources from the fifteenth to the twentieth centuries, from this country, Europe, and Latin America, especially Brazil. Clearly, only the greatest of libraries could have such riches. Students recognized the opportunity before them. Some even so threw themselves into the course that they learned sufficient Portuguese to be able to translate poetry. All worked on a library exhibition. One printed a book on a press available to undergraduates. And the instructor has edited this special issue of the *Harvard Library Bulletin*.

The academic community and beyond has been enriched, since learning was not something for the classroom alone. Thanks to publication, the community extends to readers of the *HLB* around the world and into the future. All who gain new insight from this issue or experience pleasure from it will owe thanks to Professor Roland Greene's unusual course and the library that underlay it.

In this summer of discontent, we may even find ourselves taking a more optimistic stance toward the world. Clearly, much vitality exists in this country.

Kenneth E. Carpenter

MATERIAL POETRY THE RENAISSANCE

Material Poetry of the Renaissance

THE RENAISSANCE OF MATERIAL POETRY

An exhibition assembled
by students of English 90v:
"The Material Poem"
May 4 through 29 MCMXCII