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The Undergraduate and the Harvard Library, 1937-1947

THE two previous articles in this series [1] brought the story of the undergraduate and the Harvard Library up to the year 1937. The only significance in that date lies in the fact that the present writer's first-hand knowledge of the situation began in the autumn of that year; 1932 or any year thereafter down to and including 1947 would have done just as well, for there have been no important changes in the service to undergraduates since the opening of the House Libraries in 1930–31, and none can be expected before the autumn of 1948 at the earliest, when there is a possibility that the new undergraduate library will be ready for use. This article, then, is not a record of progress that has been attained in recent years. It consists simply of a rather detailed description of the service given in the 1930's and early 1940's, supplemented by an account of the history of the plans for the future which are now taking physical form in the southeast corner of the Harvard Yard.

As noted in the second of the preceding articles, the transfer of the Undergraduate Reading Room for the beginning courses in History, Government, and Economics (ie., History I, Government I, and Economics A, as they are known) from the basement of Widener to Boylston Hall took place in the autumn of 1929, when the space in Widener was needed for additional quarters for the Treasure Room. A little later — 1930–31 — the seven House Libraries were opened. An account of these libraries is planned for a later number of the BULLETIN, and they will receive only brief mention in this article. With their opening, the Library in the Harvard Union became available for the Freshman Library, and from 1931 until the present time no major changes have been made in the library facilities for undergraduates except for the temporary closing and opening of reading rooms, the former made possible by the reduced number of students during the war years, and the latter required by the greatly increased post-war attendance.

Reference should be made at this point to the tentative plans that

[1] HARVARD LIBRARY BULLETIN, I (1947), 29–51, 221–237.

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were never carried out for the use of the great hall in Memorial Hall as a library stack to care for the overflow from Widener, and for the use of the old kitchens in the same building as an undergraduate reading room. This was proposed by Professor Robert P. Blake during his Directorship of the University Library. It would have provided a very satisfactory emergency measure, but was not undertaken because it was realized that, while it would help with the library space problem temporarily, the results could never be completely satisfactory. It must be admitted at this time that any addition to the space devoted to the library in an institution adding over 100,000 volumes a year may seem to be only temporary. A further discussion of the Harvard University Library space problem, following the theoretical one in the Spring 1947 issue of the BULLETIN, which dealt with university libraries in general, is planned for the Winter 1948 number.

A fairly full description of Harvard undergraduate library facilities as they stood after 1932 and as they now stand in 1947 follows. They are many and complex, but they fall into four main groups.

1. Those in the Harry Elkins Widener Memorial Library, which houses the larger part of the central collection of the Harvard University Library which is called the Harvard College Library.
2. The reserved book reading rooms and collections that represent primarily an overflow from Widener, and are found in Boylston Hall and in the Union.
3. The House Libraries.
4. Other libraries, special and departmental, throughout the University which provide a greater or lesser amount of service to the undergraduate students.

The Widener building was completed and occupied in the autumn of 1915. From the time of the opening to the present, the large reading room on the second floor, which is unfortunately 75 steps above the street level, has been used very largely, though not exclusively, as a reserved book reading room for undergraduates. Around the walls of the central portion and the west end of the room are 85 full sections of book shelves, plus 60 shelves under the 15 windows, all filled to capacity most of the time with books containing the assigned reading in the various courses of the College. These books are arranged first by the College Department, then by the number of the course in the Department, and under each course by the author of each volume. The

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books are changed as assignments change, but in most cases are put out for a full semester, with return between times to shelves in the main stack area or elsewhere in the building. These books for assigned reading number up to 12,000 at one time and between 20,000 and 25,000 in the course of a year. In earlier years these books, with rare exceptions, were circulated out of the building only after 9:00 in the evening Monday through Friday for overnight use, and after 5:00 o'clock in the afternoon on Saturday for the weekend, for return at 9:00 o'clock the following morning or Monday morning respectively. They are now circulated somewhat more freely in inverse ratio to the demand for them. Many of them are let out any time after 2:00 p.m. Monday through Friday and any time after noon on Saturday. The Main Reading Room is open during term time from 8:45 in the morning until 10 at night Monday through Friday, and until 5:30 on Saturday. It has not been open on Sunday since 1931, first because of the cost of keeping such a large building open for the comparatively small number of students who have cared to use it, and second because the general feeling of the students has been, when the problem has been referred to them, as it has been from time to time, that they would prefer to be able to draw the reserved books out for the weekend than to have to return them for use in the building on Sunday.

In addition to the books for assigned reading around the walls of the Reading Room, anywhere between 500 and 2500 volumes, the number varying according to the time of the year and the assignments, are kept behind the desk in the center of the room. These books number perhaps 1000 different titles, and 10,000 different volumes, in the course of a year. They are the books assigned in the large courses for which the demand is greater than the number of copies at hand will supply without restrictions in use. They are shifted constantly to meet the demand as the assignments change. They are available on request by the signing of a call slip for use within the Library, or outside of the building after 9:00 in the evening or noon on Saturday. As many as 1200 books from the closed and open shelf reserve sections are sometimes drawn out on a Saturday, most of them between 12 and 12:30, and one of the best ways to obtain an idea of the quantity of service given by the Library is to stand in the Reading Room at that time. As no record can be kept of the use within the building from the open shelves, no worthwhile statistics of the total use of the Main Reading Room are available. Additional closed reserve collections are

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found in Boylston Hall Library and the Freshman Union Library. They will be mentioned again later.

Service to undergraduates provided in other parts of the Widener building may be summarized as follows:

The Farnsworth Room, which is made up of a general reading collection for browsing purposes, has occupied the room just to the right of the main entrance since the opening of the Widener building. A note in regard to this room appeared in the Winter 1947 issue of the BULLETIN. The room is endowed in memory of Henry Weston Farnsworth, A.B. 1912, a member of the Foreign Legion of the French Army, who was killed in action 28 September 1915. It is believed to be the first World War memorial to have been established in the United States, and one of the first, if not the first, of the browsing rooms in a university library. It is designed for pleasure reading, with surroundings as nearly as possible like those of a home library. The books are all on open shelves, and include standard and modern works, chiefly in biography, travel, science, history, and literature. A large percentage of them are in English. This room was closed during most of the second World War, because of lack of demand and in order to accumulate funds that could be used to further the collection. The room seats about 35 readers at a time; the total per day has averaged 100 during the past year. The Farnsworth Room is to be transferred to the new undergraduate library.

A large part of the top floor of the Widener building has been used for undergraduate libraries from the time the building was first opened. These collections have changed from time to time, and no attempt will be made here to give a detailed record of them, but a statement about them as they stood during the college year 1946–47 is appropriate.

The Child Memorial Library, occupying the northwest corner of the floor, houses the English seminar and tutorial collections. An attendant has been in charge for all the hours that the building is open during term-time, and the room has been used extensively by undergraduate as well as graduate students.

The corresponding room in the northeast corner is the Classics seminar room, called the Herbert Weir Smyth Classical Library. It has not had an attendant and the door is locked, but undergraduates majoring in the Classics can obtain permission to use the room, which contains a good standard collection of books in the field.

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Along the east side of this floor can be found the French, Romance Languages tutorial, and Lowell Memorial collections, used as one of the headquarters for the Romance Languages, particularly the French. The two rooms housing these collections have been kept open with attendants during the past year and for more limited hours in other years. Special shelves are provided for books reserved for assigned reading in French courses.

On the same side of the building may be found the German seminar and the German tutorial rooms, available for use under certain restrictions by undergraduates.

On the south side of this floor there has been the Mathematics seminar room with the tutorial collection in that field, which is open under certain restrictions to concentrators in the field of mathematics.

During the past year two other rooms on this side of the building have been used as an overflow reading room, with over 50 chairs. An attendant has been in charge and reserved books taken from the Main Reading Room have been placed on the shelves.

The Winsor Memorial Map Room occupies the southeast corner of this floor, and is used to a considerable extent by undergraduates to pursue studies in this field beyond the range of the limited collection of maps and atlases in the Main Reading Room.

The three rooms at the southwest corner of this floor were until recently occupied by the Theatre Collection, which finds a good share of its use by undergraduates interested in the history of the theatre and current activities in this field. The headquarters for the Collection were moved to the Houghton Library in January 1947, and the bulk of the collection itself will be placed in the storage stack underneath the new undergraduate library when that building is completed.

Along the west side of the top floor of Widener are the two rooms occupied by the Poetry Collection, which was endowed by Harry Harkness Flagler in memory of George Edward Woodberry. These rooms are open during limited hours. A large percentage of their use has been by undergraduates. The collection will be shifted to the new library.

As has already been stated, the undergraduate reading room for beginning courses in History, Government, and Economics was moved from the basement of Widener to the west end of the first floor of Boylston Hall in the autumn of 1929. This room has seats for approximately 175 readers. It has contained, in addition to the reserved books

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for the courses just mentioned, a general collection in the field of some 4,000 volumes. The room has been very heavily used – although it was closed during part of the war years when the number of undergraduate students was greatly reduced.

In the Freshman Union there are two libraries: first, the Freshman History Library with some 4,000 volumes, largely made up of books for assigned reading in History I; and second, the Harvard Union collection, which became the Freshman Library when the House Libraries were opened, containing some 18,000 volumes with particular strength in the field of English literature. These reading rooms, with the overflow that is possible into the halls and other rooms in the Union, provide seats for over 200 students. They and the Boylston Hall Reading Room may be considered as overflow rooms from the Widener building as far as the assigned reading work is concerned, and all the services that they provide will be shifted to the new library.

The third group of library services for undergraduates at Harvard consists of the seven House Libraries. These will be described in a later article in more detail and nothing will be said here except to state the facts that

1) they each contain from ten to twelve thousand volumes for general reading and tutorial work;

2) while they do include some books for assigned reading, they were not organized with that in mind;

3) they have been a very successful part of the library development at Harvard and there is no reason to believe that the new library will affect their use in any way or change the arrangements for them.

The fourth group of library services for undergraduates at Harvard is provided by some forty other libraries connected with the University. It will not be possible in this article to deal with these in detail. All of these libraries are available to undergraduates if they present themselves properly introduced, but it can be readily seen that some of them, particularly those connected with the departments of the University rather than the departments of the College, are used very little by undergraduates. Among these are the Blue Hill Meteorological Observatory Library at Blue Hill, the Libraries of the Arnold Arboretum in Jamaica Plain and the Medical School in Boston, the Libraries of the Astronomical Observatory and the Gray Herbarium a mile north and west of the Yard. In addition it can be stated that several of the large libraries north of the Yard – the Law School, the

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Graduate School of Education, the Engineering School, the Farlow Herbarium, and the Museum of Comparative Zoology — also come within this group. The same holds true for a number of the smaller libraries, such as the Geographical Laboratory Library now at the Institute of Geographical Exploration, the Physics Research Library in the Lyman Laboratory, and the Isham Library of Early Instrumental Music in the Memorial Church.

Many of the other parts of the University Library, however, are used to a considerable extent by undergraduates. These include the student library for Physics in the Jefferson Laboratory, the Tutorial Library for Biochemistry in Holyoke House, the Tutorial Library for Astronomy at the Observatory, and those for Psychology (now in the basement of Memorial Hall, where it has been combined with the new Library of the Psychological Laboratories),[2] and for the Classics in Sever. There are many other special libraries connected with the departments of the College which have reserved book shelves for undergraduates and are heavily used: the Music Library in the Music Building; the Robbins Library of Philosophy and the Social Relations Library in Emerson Hall; the Mineralogical Laboratories Library in the University Museum; the Biological Laboratories Library in the Biology building; the Chemistry Department Library in Converse; the Library of Anthropology in the Peabody Museum; the Graduate School of Public Administration Library in Littauer Center; the Fine Arts Library in the Fogg Museum; and such collections as those of the Modern Language Center (Cannon House, Divinity Avenue) [3] and of Warren House, headquarters of English A. Other libraries giving service to undergraduates are those belonging to the Departments of Military and Naval Science. In addition, a number of the departmental libraries belonging to departments of the University, and having little or no direct connection with the Harvard College Library, are used to a considerable extent by undergraduates. This is true for the Architecture Library, where perhaps one third of the use has been by undergraduates; the Library of the Departments of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning; the Andover-Harvard Theological Library at the Divinity School; and the Chinese-Japanese Library of the Harvard-Yenching Institute in Boylston Hall. These libraries belonging to the departments of the University will of course be continued after the undergraduate library is completed, and it is yet uncertain how much

[2] See below, pp. 394–395.

[3] See below, pp. 396–397.

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of the undergraduate use of these libraries will be transferred. For the special libraries earlier described the same holds true. The undergraduate library will be ready to take over as much of the service to undergraduates as the other libraries are ready to give up, and it seems probable that in most cases the reserved book shelves for at least the beginning undergraduate courses will be transferred. It may be several years before all the details of these changes will be worked out.

The provisions for undergraduates that have just been listed would seem to be not only extensive but varied enough so that they should take care of all reasonable needs, but they have not enabled the Library to give what has been felt to be adequate service, and this was true even before the present greatly increased student enrollment. Why are the present conditions not satisfactory? Why is it necessary to make plans for changes? Why should a university which until 1946–47 never had more than 8500 students, and which has nearly 5,000,000 volumes in its collections, with library units of some importance in forty different buildings, and with 4500 seats in these libraries, want another library building with more books and more seats for students? There are a number of reasons which, added together, made it evident as much as ten years ago that changes were desirable.

1. Experience has shown that the very great scattering of reading room facilities reduces the use of the Library by the undergraduate, who in most cases works in more than one field. For the student in one of the graduate or professional schools, with all or practically all his work in one field, the departmentalization [4] is on the whole a convenience rather than an inconvenience, but if the undergraduate, with courses in two to five different departments, can go to one building, not five different ones in widely scattered locations, and find there all the material for assigned collateral and general reading that he needs, it is a great help and he will make more use of books.

Another complication, and under present circumstances a serious one, is the fact that the large number of reading rooms, in scattered locations, requires a much larger staff to give good service than would be needed if the rooms were combined under a single roof. The additional costs that make necessary an endowment for a new undergraduate library building come almost entirely from expenses for building maintenance, not from those for library service.

[4] The question of departmentalization in a university library will be discussed in detail in a later article in the BULLETIN.

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2. A student at Amherst, Williams, Dartmouth, Bowdoin, Oberlin, or one of the better women's colleges has at his or her disposal a much larger and better collection of books than has the Harvard undergraduate. The House Libraries with 10,000 to 12,000 volumes each, and the Union Library with 18,000, are the largest general collections completely available to the undergraduate student, and this in spite of the large number of different facilities described earlier in this statement, and in spite of the fact that the students use freely the main reading room in the Widener building, which itself contains in its chief stack area 2,000,000 volumes and pamphlets. This central collection is so large that it cannot be opened to the undergraduate except under very special circumstances, and as a result there is no large general collection freely accessible to the undergraduate at Harvard — no collection which will include a large share of the volumes that the student will need in any of his work or in the general reading which it is desirable for him to do when in college.

3. The lack of freedom of access by the undergraduate to the main collection in Widener is only part of the story. To obtain books from this collection, the student must select them from the large public catalogue on the second floor in the Widener building. This catalogue contains some 5,000,000 cards, with complexities of arrangement which present difficulties even to the faculty and staff, to say nothing of the graduate and professional school students. A large proportion of the freshmen find the catalogue so perplexing and overpowering on their first attempt to use it that they give up and never try again. No way has yet been found at Harvard or elsewhere to make the catalogue for a great collection of books simple enough in construction so that it can be used to advantage by an undergraduate student in his late teens or early twenties.

4. The attempt to combine the library services for undergraduate and graduate students in the same room has never worked out successfully at Harvard or elsewhere. It always seems to result in one group or the other feeling that it is neglected and left out in the cold. Widener is now the library headquarters for both graduate and undergraduate students, and with the tremendous demands from the graduate school students and the faculty, it has generally been the undergraduates who have been neglected, not intentionally, but because of the plan of the building and the intensity of the demand by the older groups.

5. Even more pressing than any of the four arguments already pre-

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sented has been the question of space. The article already referred to, which will appear in the Winter number for 1948 of the BULLETIN, will go into this problem in detail. Suffice it to say here that a survey of the question made in 1938 and 1939 indicated five needs:

a) Better physical facilities for rare books
b) Cheap storage for less-used books
c) More space for the staff
d) Book storage within the Yard for books that were used too often to go to the warehouse
e) Better facilities for undergraduates. More space for them was required and the construction of a building for them would help the whole situation, being much cheaper than a new central building, as well as being the only satisfactory solution to the problem of library facilities for undergraduates.

Plans and suggestions for the improvement of library service for undergraduates at Harvard have been outlined down to 1937 in the two preceding articles. A brief account of the plans that have been made during the past ten years will now be presented. The first statement during this period dealing with the problem is found in the letter written by the Librarian of Harvard College to President Conant on 14 March 1938:

> The Widener building which houses the main part of the College Library is in some ways ill-adapted to the uses to which it is put, and will within a few years be outgrown. The terms of the gift state that no addition shall be made to it. Within a short time the University must decide on a course of action to be followed when the building is full. We have attempted to make it the headquarters for both graduate and undergraduate library work, and have not been altogether successful in either field. Sooner or later, I believe the building should be devoted to one or the other.

On 24 May 1938, the Librarian, in a letter dealing with the Chinese-Japanese Library in Boylston Hall, addressed to Mr John W. Lowes, Financial Vice-President of the University, wrote as follows:

> In any plan dealing with Boylston, we should remember that the undergraduate work in the Widener Reading Room should in the near future be moved from its present location because of the pressure from graduate students and the need for a better reference room. This means that the Reading Room in Boylston should be very much enlarged or a new undergraduate library provided somewhere. We should keep in mind in this connection the History Reading Room in the Freshman Union Building, the Sociology and Philosophy Libraries in

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Emerson Hall, and the Municipal Research, French, and probably the Child Memorial Rooms in Widener. These rooms are not particularly satisfactory, and are expensive to keep up as separate units with attendants.

In the spring of 1939, many talks and discussions took place between Mr Conant, Mr Lowes, Mr Shepley and Mr Abbott of the firm of Coolidge, Shepley, Bulfinch and Abbott, and the Librarian, dealing with plans for the extension of the space devoted to the Library. A series of proposals was made for annexes to the Widener building. Drawings for buildings where Boylston Hall now stands and where the Houghton Library now stands were prepared, as well as for a very large building in the southeast corner of the Yard where the undergraduate library is now rising. Consideration was also given to two sites on Mt Auburn Street. During this same period, the Librarian presented a series of reports covering the problem of space in the College Library. (As has already been indicated, the question of space for the College Library and the University Library as a whole will be discussed in a later article, and only the section dealing with facilities for undergraduates will be considered here.) In one of these reports, the Librarian wrote:

> Space for readers is a more serious problem. For many years there has been a shortage of studies and stalls for professors and graduate students. The studies in the Littauer building will help [the Littauer building was new at that time], but will not entirely relieve the situation as far as officers or professors are concerned. No adequate periodical room and no satisfactory reference room are available [in Widener]. The main Reading Room, which might serve for these purposes, is used largely for assigned reading by undergraduates. While it is convenient to have this service provided in the central building, it is not necessary. If it could be transferred elsewhere, sufficient reading room space would be available for many years to come, and it would be possible to assign tables and shelves to graduate students who cannot be cared for in the [stack] stalls. So far as space for readers is concerned, then, it is fair to say that if the assigned reading now carried on in the Reading Room could be transferred to a place out of the building, fairly good arrangements for all other readers could be made for at least another ten years.

Later in the same report the following statements appeared:

> It becomes necessary sooner or later to use one of the three following methods [to provide additional space]:
>
> 1. Add to the present building. If this cannot be done because of the terms of the gift under which the building was accepted, an annex might be placed as near as possible to the present building with access to an underground passage or possibly a bridge connecting one or more of the upper floors. Additions of

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this kind could be placed on either or both the east or west sides of Widener. These additions would provide reading rooms for undergraduates. . . . A brief description of a proposal of this character will be found in Appendix B accompanying this report. . . .

Appendix B. If it is decided to solve the College Library space problem by providing additional facilities in the southeast corner of the Yard, a first unit (a) should be completed within five years. It might be placed on the present location of Boylston Hall and should contain approximately 1,000,000 cubic feet. The first and most essential feature would be reading room facilities for undergraduates and should include four reserved book [assigned reading] reading rooms seating 200 to 225 men each, a reference room and a periodical room, each with a capacity of 50 to 75 readers. These rooms should be as close to the ground level as possible. Underneath them space could probably be found for three levels of stack holding approximately 500,000 books.

Subsequently, a more detailed statement about a proposed building for undergraduates was prepared. It read in part as follows:

The first place among the building needs is for an undergraduate library. Such a building is desirable from two points of view.

1. It would relieve the pressure in Widener and should make it possible to continue that building as a central library of the University during the next generation. With the relief provided by an undergraduate library, Widener would be a very satisfactory research library center, and indeed with the arrangements that have been planned, it should be more satisfactory than it has been ever since it was opened.[5]

2. The second reason for the undergraduate library is the fact that Widener has not been, and never can be, a satisfactory headquarters for undergraduate library service. It was planned and built with the graduate students and faculty in mind. It has a tremendously large catalogue that is over the heads of the majority of the undergraduates. It has a collection of 2,000,000 books to which it is impossible to grant free access to undergraduates. They need a library of perhaps 100,000 volumes, mostly of modern, replaceable books, to which they can be given ready access and for which a catalogue of its own will be made. At present, without stack access, and with a catalogue built for research workers, and with a building that was not planned for their needs, our undergraduates are less well cared for than those in any of the better colleges of the country such as Amherst, Williams and Wesleyan. There is no question in my mind about the need for an undergraduate library, and with one I see no reason why the Widener building should not last for many years as the central research library of the University.

The Undergraduate Library, as it has been planned tentatively, will provide four 'reserved books' reading rooms, seating altogether over 600, a reference

[5] It should be stressed here that from the outset of planning it was clearly understood that undergraduates would always be welcome in Widener whenever they needed material not available in any separate library established for them.

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room, a browsing room, and a periodical room, together with a large smoking room in the basement. There will be a stack with completely free access, housing perhaps 75,000 volumes, so placed that it will be used as a passageway for the men going to the reading room. If the College thinks it desirable, there can be two or more floors above the reading room levels for a center for tutorial work. . . . The building may well be placed in one of the blocks facing on Mt. Auburn Street where it would be between the Yard and the Houses. The cost of the building is estimated at $1,000,000. If the tutorial rooms are omitted, that should be ample, but it would probably be safer to say $1,250,000, with a possibility of an extension to $1,500,000 if the College decides to build the tutorial rooms. To this should be added $250,000 for equipping the new building, buying the books and cataloguing them, and making the alterations that would be desirable at Widener when the undergraduate work is moved from it.

To endow the undergraduate library suitably would take $1,500,000. The actual cost of operating it and providing service would be $80,000 a year but some $20,000 of this would be saved through closing up libraries elsewhere in the University that would no longer be needed.

Summing up the cost involved in the new building, we need from one million to one million and a half for the building itself, $250,000 for equipment and alterations, and $1,500,000 for endowment, or approximately $3,000,000 in all.

Report followed report, each going into somewhat more detail. Early in 1940 the Librarian sent the following statement to Mr Lowes:

The pressure for space in the Widener Memorial Library building has become so great that in some way relief must be obtained. A study of the situation indicates that one method of relieving the congestion and at the same time improving the service given by the Library is the construction of an Undergraduate Library Center.

The need for such a building goes back beyond the present congestion in Widener. The attempt to provide adequate library service for undergraduates in the same building that houses a great research collection and cares for graduate students and a large faculty complicates matters in many ways. It means, in the first place, that no general stack access can be given to the undergraduates and that the average undergraduate goes through his college course without ever being directly exposed to a large general collection of books. It means that the catalogue must be made more expensive, as it must be planned for use by both advanced students and by undergraduates. It costs more and is less satisfactory for both groups. It means that two types of reference service must be given, and in a building like Widener, it means that the charging desk becomes congested and the reading room which should house a great reference collection is used for assigned book reading.

With the above in mind, plans have been developed for an undergraduate library building. A study of the situation indicated that the building should provide:

1. A seating capacity in the reading rooms for 800 to 900 students. These

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should be in rooms none of which seated over 200, and none of which could be called monumental in character.

2. The reading room facilities should include, in addition to the general reading rooms for assigned reading, a good reference room with space for 5000 to 7500 volumes; a good periodical room; and a good browsing room. Among the 800 to 900 seats specified under (1), 150 should be comparatively easy, but not lounging chairs.

3. The stack room in the building should have direct access from the reading rooms with no restrictions of any kind, and arrangements should be such as to encourage the students to go through the stack rather than to discourage them.

4. There must, of course, be adequate toilet facilities, and in addition a large smoking-room; the latter can properly be in the basement.

5. The reading room should be as close to the street level as possible.

6. The library should contain a good collection of books for general reading; all books needed for tutorial work; and all books for assigned reading which students are not expected to purchase for themselves.

7. There must, of course, be provision for a catalogue, but it will not be extensive. . . .

On 16 February 1940, the Librarian, the Library Council, and the Administrative Board of the College met in the office of the Dean of the College and discussed various plans for relieving the pressure on the Widener building. Following this discussion, it was voted that the assembled Boards approve the plan of a special library for undergraduates; the Librarian reported to Mr Conant that this vote was unanimous, and that, as far as he could tell, everyone seemed to approve of it heartily. Later in the spring, the problem was presented to the Committee on Instruction, with similar results. The report of the Librarian for the year 1939–40 included a further detailed statement about the proposal. The President and Fellows of Harvard College approved of the plan in theory and were ready to go ahead with the building if money became available. But by this time the war in Europe was reaching a crisis. No funds for an undergraduate library were in sight, and postponement of construction seemed inevitable.

During the next period, the Librarian brought the matter up at various meetings of alumni when the opportunity presented itself, as well as before the Library Council and the Committee of the Overseers to Visit the Library. At a meeting in the Harvard Club in New York City, the Librarian was seated beside Mr Thomas W. Lamont, '92, and told him in some detail of the plans and hopes for the undergraduate library. Mr Lamont expressed great interest.

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With the completion of the Houghton and the New England Deposit Libraries early in 1942, the space situation was relieved for the time being. The United States had entered the war, and any active planning for the undergraduate library was shelved. Then, in the autumn of 1944 the Librarian had another talk with Mr Lamont about library needs and went over with him in some detail the plans for the undergraduate library that had been developed four years earlier. Mr Lamont again expressed interest, and hoped that he would be able to help in making the building possible at a later time. Correspondence with him continued, and on 24 July 1945 he wrote as follows:

> Now that the burden on the colleges for service training is beginning to let up a bit, I am wondering whether you at Cambridge have gone further in your minds in the matter of a Library for undergraduates. Perhaps my inquiry is emphasized by the announcement made by Dean Buck's committee as to possible changes in the curriculum set-up — changes designed in part, I should think, to encourage wider undergraduate reading.
>
> What are your estimated money requirements today for your project? If a million dollars were in sight, would you go ahead with it? If not, what is the figure, and have you several important sources of gift in mind?
>
> Don't let me interrupt your holiday. There is no hurry about an answer. And you must not take my inquiry too seriously, though I am much interested.

Correspondence and talk between Mr Lamont and Mr Conant and the Librarian continued during the summer and autumn, and, the estimates of cost being satisfactory, on 21 November 1945 President Conant was able to announce that Mr Lamont had given to the University $1,500,000 to be used for the construction of an undergraduate library.

The selection of the architect, Mr Henry R. Shepley of Coolidge, Shepley, Bulfinch and Abbott, was made almost immediately. The next problem was the site. The first to be considered was that of Boylston Hall, theoretically the one best adapted for the building. However, it was found impossible to place a building there large enough for the purpose without tearing down not only Boylston but Grays and Weld as well, and so it was reluctantly given up. Two sites on ends of blocks facing Mt Auburn Street were then considered. They seemed to have the advantage of being approximately half way between the freshman and the upper class dormitories, and the size and shape of the building would not be limited by the surroundings; but either of them meant that the freshmen and commuters must cross Massachusetts Avenue to reach the Library, and that the new building would be far from the Library center, the classrooms, and the labora-

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tories. There were also serious practical complications in connection with the use of each of the lots.

The fourth location considered was the southeast corner of the Yard, the corner of Quincy Street and Massachusetts Avenue, which was occupied by the Dana-Palmer House and its attractive grounds. There were several disadvantages. The Dana-Palmer House must be destroyed or moved; the wooded grounds must be lost. Removal of the house to another site would be expensive. The situation in the Yard limited the ground area that could be covered and the type of architecture that could be used. The site was a considerable distance from the living and dining quarters of the upperclassmen, who with the exception of those from Adams House would have to cross not only Massachusetts Avenue but Mt Auburn Street to reach the Library. The use of this site would also involve removal of the Dudley Gate. However, the site had the very great advantage of being near the Library center, which would simplify administration and save considerable space in the new building. It was the only site available on even a small hillside which might make possible readily accessible entrances on two different levels, an arrangement which was regarded as highly desirable for expediting the tremendous traffic that was expected. It was so placed that under it a two-story stack could be built and used as a much needed overflow for books from the Widener and Houghton buildings, with connection to those buildings by tunnel. This two-story stack would then become the first of the underground stacks which were a part of the general plan for the development of the University Library. (In this connection it should be remembered that it is much easier and less expensive to place underground stacks beneath a building than elsewhere, and that the time to do it is before the building is constructed.) Further, this site fixed the southeast corner of the Yard for library use, and so concentrated the space occupied by the Harvard College Library near the center of the University. Of greatest importance, it was in the Yard, close to the freshman dormitories and dining hall, and also where it could be reached between classes with a minimum of time by all the students. The heaviest use of the Library by undergraduates has always been in the morning between classes. Before a decision was made, the problem was talked over in detail not only by the Corporation and members of the Library staff, but by a committee of the students, and finally this site was selected, with considerable reluctance because of the necessity of disposing of the

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Dana-Palmer House. Complaints about the possible destruction of the house soon appeared in the *Harvard Alumni Bulletin*, and Mr Lamont came forward again and generously offered to provide the funds for moving it. A site was selected across Quincy Street between the Union and the Faculty Club, where it is to serve as a guest house for the University.

It was at once evident to the architect and the Librarian that help in making the plans was desirable. The Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences was asked to appoint a committee of the Faculty to work with the Librarian, and the Dean of the College was asked to make arrangements with the Student Council for a student committee. In the meantime the Librarian talked over with members of the College Library staff the different problems that arose.

The general principles of arrangement for the building were determined quickly, but many details remained to be worked out. It was realized from the beginning that the success of the building would depend very largely on:

1. The efficiency of the ventilation system
2. The lighting
3. The sound absorption qualities of the walls and ceiling
4. The ease with which the students could find their books for assigned reading and obtain them.

A large share of the efforts of the architect, the Librarian, and the various groups interested has been concentrated on these problems. The question of coat rooms and of smoking facilities also received considerable attention, as did the problem of making the storage stack to be placed under the building easily available for those who wanted to use it without complicating the use of the rest of the building by undergraduates.

From the beginning Mr Shepley gave a great deal of attention to the outside appearance of the building, in order that it might fit into the general spirit of the Yard. Questions of shape, bulk, and color were all carefully studied. Special features of arrangement desired by the Librarian complicated the problem. The early plans called for the second entrance of the building directly from Massachusetts Avenue through the Class of 1880 Gate, known as the Roosevelt-Bacon Gate. This was given up, although it would have meant the shortest possible distance to be traversed by many of the men from the Houses, because the width

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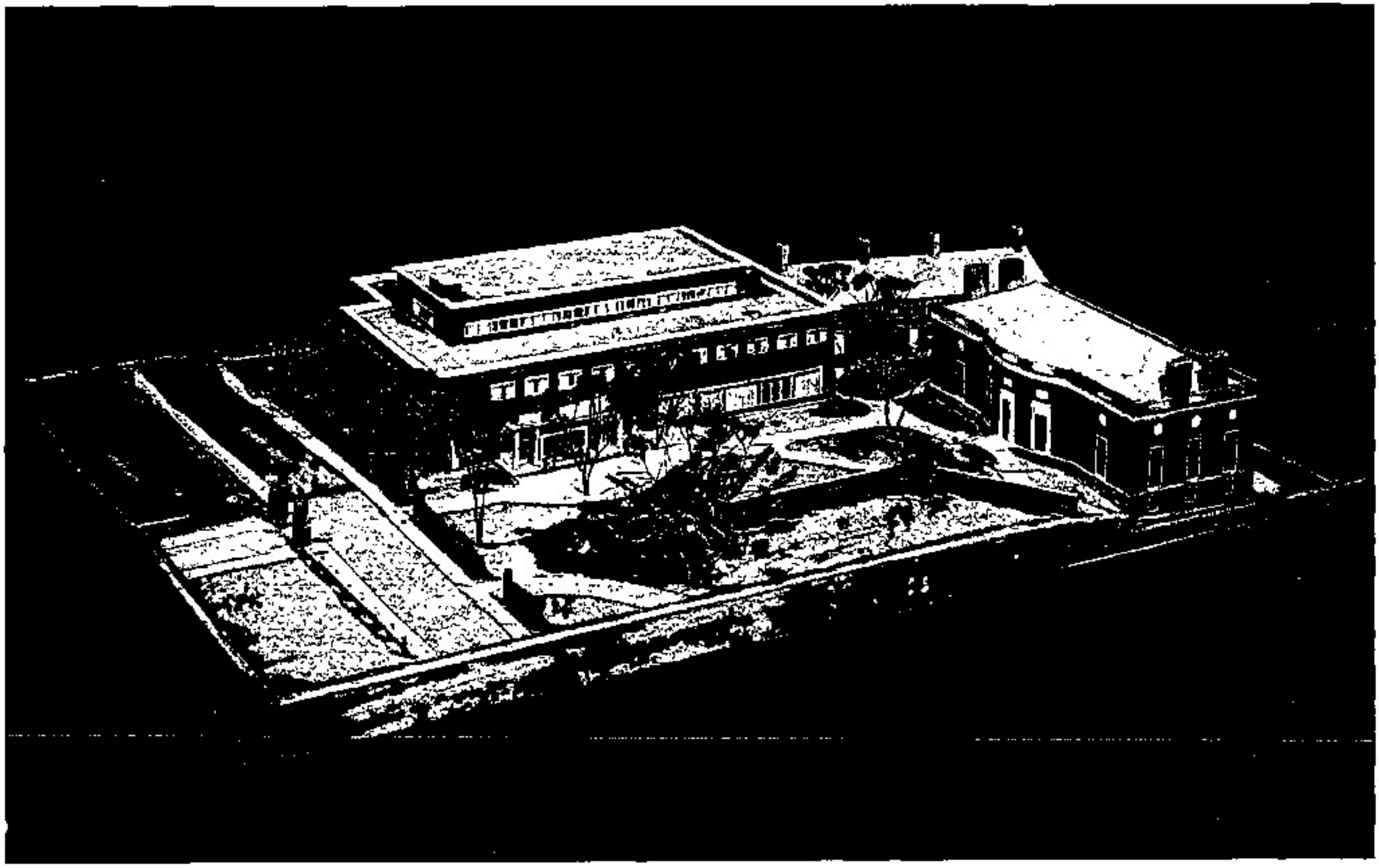

PLATE I

MODEL OF THE LAMONT LIBRARY, FROM THE NORTHEAST

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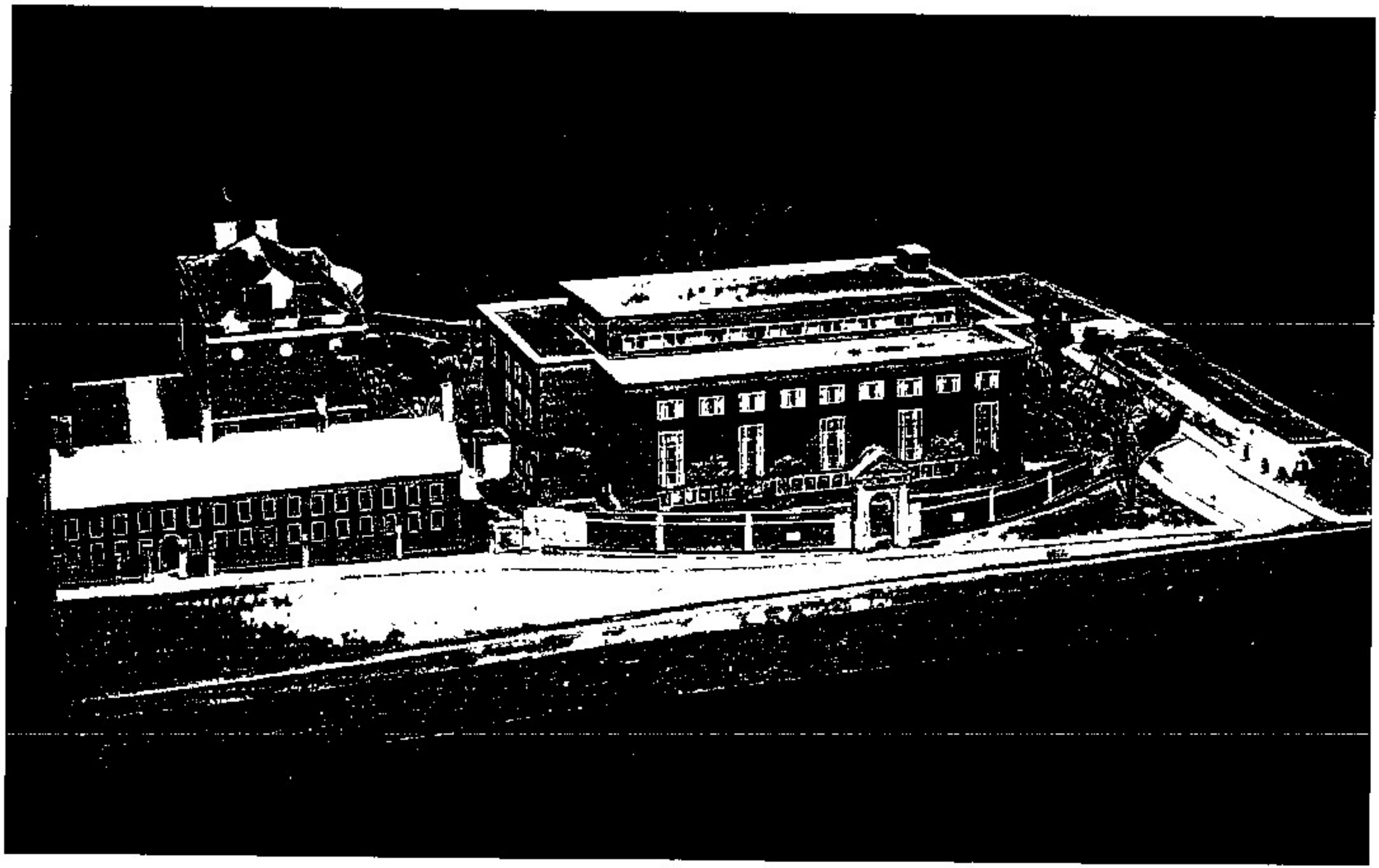

PLATE II

MODEL OF THE LAMONT LIBRARY, FROM THE SOUTH

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of Massachusetts Avenue at this point made it seem unwise to do anything that would encourage crossing, and the second entrance was shifted to the west side between Wigglesworth and Houghton, placing it farther away from the other entrance on the floor above and making it unnecessary to break through the center of the large reading area on the ground floor.

In June 1946 the plans were taken to Princeton by the Librarian and talked over in detail with the Committee of Librarians and Architects that has been working for several years past on university library planning, aided by a Carnegie grant. Criticisms of the plan there brought about a change of arrangement of the stack on the three reading room levels from long parallel stack ranges to the alcoves that had been suggested in 1939.

Two photographs of a model of the building, as seen from the Yard and from Massachusetts Avenue, are published herewith (Plates I and II). A full description and discussion of the plans will appear in a later issue. By way of present conclusion, it may be stated that the main objects of the building are:

1. To concentrate as far as is practicable the library service for undergraduates in a central location
2. To make the books readily available to the students
3. To encourage general and recreational as well as assigned and collateral reading.

In addition, there is the fact already stressed that the establishment of a separate undergraduate library seemed to be the most suitable way of obtaining relief from the pressure upon the Widener building, and so of making the latter a satisfactory center for those research activities of the University which fall within the scope of the Library.

To the building which, directly and indirectly, will effect this signal twofold advance will be given the name of Lamont, in token of the perennial gratitude of the University to the alumnus who has made the advance possible.

KEYES D. METCALF

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