The libraries of the Harvard houses

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The Libraries of the Harvard Houses

BRIEF mention has been made of the House Libraries at Harvard in previous issues of the Harvard Library Bulletin, in articles dealing with library facilities for undergraduates and with the question of spatial growth throughout the University Library system. It is the purpose of the present article to describe the House Libraries as they are at present, to trace something of their history, and to give some indication of the place they will probably occupy in the life of the undergraduate student at Harvard after the Lamont Library is in operation.

In 1928 the generosity of Mr. Edward S. Harkness, Yale '97, enabled President Lowell to carry out a long-cherished hope, namely the institution of a House Plan designed to restore to undergraduate life at Harvard some of the things which had been lost in the recent decades of sweeping growth. An important element in this plan was the notion of a separate library for each House. The Masters of the first Houses believed, as did the President, that the residential unit plan, bringing together students and members of the teaching staff informally, would become an indispensable part of the tutorial system adopted in many departments of instruction in 1926 and 1927. Professor Chester Noyes Greenough, first Master of Dunster House, in particular recognized how closely the work of Tutors and their students could be integrated with the life of the House community. It would be to the mutual advantage of both systems to breathe new life into the instructional methods of the College through the very channel which was to restore to undergraduate life some of the social values it had offered before the College became merely one unit in a great University. He saw the House library as 'the heart and very center' of the House; he has been called by another Master 'one of the real founders of the House system at Harvard' partly because of his success in making the library an active link between what he conceived to be the best features of the tutorial plan and the new residential units. Once the basic point of departure was established, the pattern was filled in by Tutors and Faculty members interested in creating a new kind of library service as one of the essential functions of each House.
Mr Greenough’s earnest efforts were successful also in securing from alumni and friends gifts of books and money sufficient to provide the Dunster House Library with more than ten thousand books during its first year. The architects designed for this Library a monumental room in the center of the House, directly under the tower. Approached through E-entry, the room is on the second floor and looks south toward the river through windows nearly the full height of the room. Ladders are needed to reach many of the books, for the shelves at all points run eleven high above base paneling. When the blinds are raised and the lights are on in the evening colorful rows of books are plainly visible from Memorial Drive, and dominate the room completely. The arrangement is also a bit impractical. This was understood from the start, but to the certain knowledge of those who have been associated with the House no one has ever been seriously inconvenienced. The one minor casualty on record occurred when a visiting professor residing temporarily in the House tumbled from a ladder. While the unusual height of the shelving continues to worry a few librarians, it is generally admired by all visitors, and most residents of Dunster House look upon it as a source of pride and distinction. Where there are no shelves the walls are undecorated save for the paneling and an inscription over the fireplace. Stack room adjoins the reading room and provides space for additional books.

The Library of Lowell House had pioneer aspects similar to those of Dunster House, the two Houses opening together in the autumn of 1930. Professor Julian Lowell Coolidge, first Master of Lowell House, fully endorsed Mr. Greenough’s views as to the central character of the Library, and was likewise able to secure liberal gifts toward the initial purchases for the shelves. His wish to provide books which would serve a wide diversity of undergraduate readers in a sense complemented Mr Greenough’s more specialized interest in creating a scholarly gentleman’s library to appeal to literary tastes and encourage potential bibliophiles. Lowell House also has its Library on the second floor of the central portion of the building. Reached through D-entry, its windows look south upon the larger of the two quadrangles included in the House. It is an attractive room, simply designed and well proportioned. The paneling is dark; shelves above low cupboards run seven high, requiring a short ladder for the highest books. On the wall over the fireplace hangs a portrait of Mr Coolidge by Bernard M. Keyes. Stack space was originally provided in
a room adjoining the Library, and was later doubled by taking over part of the suite on the floor just above.

While the first two Houses were rounding out a year of experiment and adjustment, five other Houses were in process of construction and organization, preparatory to opening in the autumn of 1931. Of the five only two were planned with library quarters of entirely new construction. Eliot House Library constitutes the largest reading room of all the House Libraries. Like Dunster House it is of monumental dimensions, but here the length of the room is broken by shelving which extends into the room at four points from the side walls, adding to the book capacity and making a pleasing alcove effect in each of the four corners. Like its predecessors this room faces south, overlooking the Anderson Bridge and Memorial Drive at the Weld Boat House. Also like its predecessors it is on the second floor and approached through a residential entry, in this case C-entry. There is ample stack space in a room adjoining at the east end of the main room. Originally a double-deck stack, the lower level was dismantled in 1947 and converted into an extremely attractive reading alcove, looking out over the quadrangle, and specially furnished as a memorial to Sylvester Gardiner, a resident of the House who died while an undergraduate. In the large reading room, in closed cases between the windows, there is on permanent display perhaps the most important collection in existence of the writings of Thomas Stearns Eliot and of books relating to him. This collection draws to Eliot House occasional research students working on Mr Eliot's writings, and is the only special collection of exceptional importance in any House Library. A number of literary documents of general interest are in frames along the bookcases, and the Library has four portraits from the University's collection. Of chief interest is that of the late Professor Roger Bigelow Morrill, first Master of Eliot House, painted by Alexandre Lacoubex. Others are a copy by Pratt of a portrait of Sir George Downing, a Tutor for a few years after his graduation in 1642, and later a British statesman for whom Downing Street in London was named; the portrait of Benjamin Franklin as a young man attributed to Robert Feke; a portrait of Robert Bacon, Overseer and Fellow between 1889 and 1917, painted by Philip A. Laslo. Over the atlas case is a copy of the chart of the New England coast made by Cyprian Southack about 1720.

The Library of Adams House is in a building constructed in 1930-
31 to house the dining hall and common rooms of the House as well as the Library. Approached by a richly adorned stairway under a Moorish ceiling, the Library is on the second floor, with windows facing south overlooking the lower wing of the building. The room is simply decorated with cherry wood panels, giving a brighter tone than the woodwork in Lowell and Eliot House Libraries. Stack space adjoins the main reading room as in the other Houses. A portrait of John Quincy Adams by William Page hangs opposite the entrance of the Library, and an autograph letter written by him while in college is in a frame nearby.

Leverett House has its Library in a room off the main entry to McKinlock Hall which had formerly been used for the Freshman History Library but which was originally designed for use as a dining hall. This plan provided a splendid stack floor on the same level, which is below the street by a few feet, in the space first designed for kitchen facilities. It also provides unusually good natural light from windows high in opposite walls, at no loss to the maximum shelf capacity, since the shelves run beneath the windows. The woodwork is plain and suggests a seventeenth-century interior; the high-backed settles in the deep fireplace above are in the same motif. A copy of an early portrait of Governor John Leverett and a copy of one of Increase Mather further suggest Harvard's earlier years. Other portraits are of Charles Greely Loring, Fellow 1838-57, by William Page, and of Samuel Rogers, English poet and man of affairs, painted in 1847 by Chester Harding and given to Edward Everett by the artist.

Winthrop House Library is a room almost exactly corresponding in plan and arrangement to that just described in Leverett House. The main reading room is somewhat larger and the woodwork is finished in a pleasant green tint, but the arrangement of windows and shelves, and the commodious stack area adjoining are the same, since this room was also designed and used for a good many years as a dining hall. It occupies floor space below the street level just off the main entry of Standish Hall. Except for a sepia reproduction of a portrait of Governor John Winthrop, the portraits here are those of men of science, in keeping with the traditional interest of Winthrop House in the scientific fields, the House having had for its Master since its opening in 1931 Ronald M. Ferry, Professor of Bio-Chemistry. Over the fireplace is William Page's copy of Kellerhoven's portrait of Sir Benjamin Thompson, Count Rumford, who attended Professor John Win-
thorp's scientific lectures just before the Revolution and helped to pack the apparatus and books which were moved to Concord in 1775; later he endowed the Rumford Professorship. Gilbert Stuart's portrait of Benjamin Bussey, who died in 1842, is near by. Bussey gave his farm for the Institution which bears his name and for the lands occupied by the Arnold Arboretum, and established a Professorship in the Law School by a bequest of money. Most interesting of all is Copley's painting of Dr Winthrop, with one of his famed telescopes on the table beside him. The identical telescope is in a glass case just below the portrait.

Instead of building a new room for the purpose, Kirkland House made use of a building which stood on land adjoining Smith Halls and the site on which Bryan Hall was to be erected. This building, one of Cambridge's well-preserved eighteenth-century dwellings, was built in 1762 at the corner of Dunster and Winthrop Streets. In 1928 it was condemned to make way for the Indoor Athletic Building, but members of the Cambridge Historical Society and other interested citizens convinced the University that it ought to be preserved. It was then moved to the corner of Boylston and South Streets and used for a private residence until the decision was made to include it in Kirkland House as a library. Known as the John Hicks House from its builder and first occupant, who went forth early on 19 April 1775 to give his life in a skirmish with the retreating British troops in North Cambridge, it was later used as a headquarters by Colonel Israel Putnam. Except for additions at the rear made during the nineteenth century, the house is virtually as it was designed, and retains much of its original hardware and paneling. It contains nine rooms on three floors and has a large basement divided into two rooms, all of which have been equipped with shelving arranged so as not to disturb the original fireplaces and the paneling around the chimney on each level.

Hicks House has the charm of the colonial; and it is possible for men to read in small rooms, often literally undisturbed for a whole evening. No large portraits are in the building, which is said to be the least fireproof of any Harvard building, but it has on its walls numerous small pictures and documents of literary and historical interest, some connected directly with the history of the House and with President Kirkland's time. The approach to the Library is through a covered passage from G-entry, which opens also upon the quadrangle between Bryan and Smith. The main facade of the building faces
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Boylston Street, but neither that door nor the one on South Street is used. Both are fitted with fire-locks so that they could be opened from within in case of emergency.

So much for the architectural aspects of the House Libraries. The kind of library service to be given by the seven Libraries depended more than anything else on the selection of the books which would go into them. Mr Greenough and Mr Coolidge had proceeded to secure funds and collect books as soon as the plans for the first two Houses were confirmed and work began. Since it was clearly indicated from the start that if the Houses were to succeed in fulfilling their purpose it must be on the basis of independence and individuality, Dr Robert P. Blake, at that time Director of the University Library, deliberately sought to avoid any policy of standardization in the collections for the Libraries or in the method of assembly. He and Mr Alfred C. Potter, the College Librarian, stood by as observers, ready to supply professional advice or assistance if needed. Space was provided in the Widener building for an assistant, specially appointed for the initial selection, who worked directly with the Masters and the Tutors of Dunster and Lowell Houses. This work continued through the winter of 1919-20. Lists were submitted by staff members of each House representing desirable purchases in the field or fields with which each man was best acquainted. These were checked against each other for overlaps, and with publishers' information to determine appropriate editions, accessibility, and price. Titles were marked for priority of purchase: those to be bought out of the first one hundred dollars, those out of the first thousand dollars, and so on. Some effort was made to obtain library editions where available in preference to ordinary trade editions; attractive appearance was regarded as important along with content and utility.

A few general principles guided the selection of titles, their application varying somewhat among the men who contributed suggestions and advice. All books it was felt should have some distinct reference or recreational value, and the rule of the 'two Rs' was often quoted in the inevitable discussions of challenged titles. Many felt that the emphasis ought to be on reading material required in courses likely to be taken by undergraduates in various fields, with additional material to encourage and provide for private reading of 'serious' or pastime variety. Some felt, with Mr Greenough, that this was an opportunity to bring together items important and interesting in the bib-
liographical sense, particularly in the fields of English literature and history, and to make readily accessible to undergraduates books they might never otherwise know of, much less see and handle and read. As the books poured in the full range of opinion was freely expressed.

The most significant influence which pervaded all the general principles and personal opinions was undoubtedly that of the tutorial system, which in 1929-30 had been in use in many departments of instruction for about three or four years. Most of the men concerned in the selection and arrangement of the books for the Libraries would be directing the reading outside of courses of undergraduates living in their Houses. The place which this kind of directed reading had in the programs of undergraduates was far larger than it is today in most fields, and it is not easy to suggest in the light of present conditions just how extensively the tutorial function aided Masters and those on their staffs in visualizing what they wanted these collections of books to do. On the whole it helped to extend the range, and at the same time control the tendency for specialization. It made it possible for many Tutors to select specific tools with which they would work, more directly than had ever been possible with the books available in Widener for undergraduate access. The project of getting together the books for the first two Houses enlisted at one time or another the active cooperation of a hundred or more Faculty members working together for the development of undergraduate facilities, not a common occurrence at Harvard since the emergence of so large a number of self-contained departments of study and research.

Having secured funds in advance, Dunster House and Lowell House were in a position to use professional help in getting the cataloging and classifying started before the books were placed on the shelves. Time did not serve to complete all of the work, and it was finished in the two Libraries by Tutors as volunteers and by the newly appointed student assistants. The beginnings were made with Library of Congress printed catalogue cards, carrying the classification numbers used by the Library of Congress. Both Libraries came to use a modified version of this basic system, a version that has been further modified continually by successive Librarians through the intervening years. The five Libraries which opened in 1931 were in a different situation from that of their predecessors regarding finances. Mr. Lowell felt it unwise that each Master should appeal individually for funds among his friends and the alumni in general, and the costs of prepar-
ing and arranging books for the first two Houses had convinced him that a simpler and less expensive procedure was more appropriate. He therefore arranged that part of Mr. Harkness's gift be allocated for the purchase of books, $20,000 to be appropriated for each of the five Houses, and specified further that if the Houses felt they needed to spend money on cataloguing and preparation such sums would have to be found within the purchasing fund. These Houses therefore placed their orders and did all their work directly, and made no use of special help or space in Widener.

By November, 1931, the Houses had in their libraries from six to ten thousand books each, ten thousand volumes being the number generally agreed upon as a reasonable maximum for each collection to maintain. Dunster House had already placed on its shelves all but a few of the books it wanted for the initial collection, and had exceeded the maximum by over five hundred volumes. Lowell House was also virtually complete with 8,500 volumes. The newer Libraries still had at that time from 650 to more than a thousand books each on outstanding orders. All the collections have grown during the subsequent years, making annual additions of 150 to 300 or more volumes.

The problem of weeding out obsolete material to keep space on the shelves for new books did not become acute until the post-war period, with the necessity for buying books in larger quantities to cover the inactive years. In any kind of library it is difficult to keep a systematic weeding program abreast of additions, and particularly is this true where much of the selection of new books is from recommendations by Tutors who want to keep their subjects properly represented. It is not always easy for them to pass judgment on books to be discarded from a collection recently assembled by their own efforts and those of their associates.

At present the Libraries contain a total of 82,961 volumes, or something under an average of 12,000 volumes per House. The increase over the maximum originally set is lower than the great increase in numbers of readers served during the post-war years, when each House added approximately one third to the number of residents. Volumes in the House Libraries are now divided as follows:

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<td>Leverett</td>
<td>11,012</td>
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<td>Lowell</td>
<td>13,685</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winthrop</td>
<td>10,717</td>
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The schemes of classification devised for use in the Houses opened in 1931 were generally less exact than the earlier two based on Library of Congress practice. Letters designate broad general classes within which authors are arranged alphabetically; usually the letters employed suggest the name of the subject. Kirkland House began by using subject classes along with period classes based on chronological relationship of books, and designed to bring together writers and topics illustrative of a whole period or century, as, for example, the Renaissance, Eighteenth Century, Nineteenth Century, etc. The juxtaposition of volumes thus attained did under certain conditions enrich the historical perspective of observant browsers, and was useful to men working in specific periods of literature or history. It limited somewhat the location of books for reference and in time a special section for them grew to contain many of the more important new additions, separated thus from most of the standard works to which they related. It proved over the years difficult to maintain logical development within these loose groupings, and it came to be felt that their valuable features were fully appreciated only by a limited number of the men using the Library. Since the war another scheme has been applied in Kirkland House, based upon the standard Decimal Classification as modified for use in the future Lamont Library collection. This brings together all material related by subject; during the months since it has been in effect it has proved more practical for the majority of the students to use.

Adams House uses twenty-one broad classes, indicated by initial letters, with forty sub-classes indicated by numbers. Within the subclass books are in alphabetical order by author’s name. Most of the Libraries began making rather extensive subject entries in their respective card catalogues, but this has been greatly reduced as the Libraries have grown and the work has passed on to successive assistants.

There is inevitable duplication (perhaps as high as fifty per cent) of titles through the Libraries, since it was recognized at the outset that undue specialization, going beyond tutorial and course reading, plus selected standard literary and informational works, would be a distortion of the purpose the Libraries were intended to serve. Nonetheless, individuality has been the keynote of the Houses, as already stated, and in effect most of the Libraries now exhibit one or more fields of special emphasis. Science has been cultivated more extensively in Winthrop than elsewhere; music is an important subject in Lowell House, which has the largest of the phonograph record collections; Leverett and
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Adams are both strong in Americana; Eliot and Kirkland followed the influence of Mr. Greenough at Dunster House and all three have well-furnished collections on English literature and history, including a number of books of relative rarity for undergraduate reading rooms.

The most important development in the contents of the Libraries, since they were first planned and gathered together, is the addition of large and useful collections of recorded music. Each Library spends from one quarter to one third of its annual book budget on records, and all have at least six or seven hundred now in active use, Lowell House many more. These require replacement more frequently than books, but are used by residents more intensively piece for piece than most books. Part of this use is in relation to studies in music, but much of it is entirely recreational, and the place which it holds in the Houses is one of the clearest indications of the way in which House Libraries make a direct contribution to the resources of the Houses, in terms of things the residents need and want to use for their own help and enjoyment.

The crowding of the College during the post-war years has influenced conditions in the House Libraries just as it has nearly every other aspect of the educational program. Peace and privacy have reached a higher premium than ever before with occupancy doubled up, and many a man unable to concentrate in his room has found a quiet spot in his House Library. On the other hand, the demand for more reading matter, and for extra copies of required books in the big undergraduate courses, while straining the conservative loan policies originally followed in most of the Houses, so that much more freedom is now general, has taxed funds in some Houses and threatened the basic principle that House collections should avoid duplicating Widener reserve book stocks.

Maintenance and administration of the House Libraries has been from the beginning entirely in the hands of students and Tutors, working under observation of the Director of the University Library, but directly responsible to the House Master, usually through a committee of the House staff and undergraduate residents. The Librarian is charged with keeping the library open and in order, with securing new books and records recommended by staff members or others; with forwarding bills and payrolls for the expenses incurred; and with the general oversight of the Library so that the collection may be protected from careless or willful negligence on the part of users. To aid him in
these duties the Librarian has an assistant known as a 'maintenance man,' who types catalogue cards, labels and plates books, and otherwise prepares material for the shelves. Between them they usually share the work involved in ordering new books and records, and keeping track of books which become problems for one reason or another. Sometimes they find that a reader, rather than a book, is the basic problem.

In addition to the Librarian and his maintenance man, enough attendants are added to each Library payroll to keep the rooms open at all reasonable hours during the college term. The number of hours and attendants varies from one House to another, but Libraries are open from eighty to one hundred hours per week and use from eight to ten or twelve attendants each. No one is employed for anything that approaches full-time duty, the maximum being seventy-five hours per man per month, and less for most of the attendants. Pay scales are sufficient to assist boys wishing to earn a little money while in college, but would never encourage a man to seek his career as a member of a House Library staff. No effort has been made to introduce special skills into the simple procedures needed to keep the Libraries running successfully, and every year there are more qualified residents eager for appointments than there are jobs to be filled. This informal system of operation has two special advantages: it keeps funds for each House Library payroll available as potential earnings for residents; and it keeps the administration of whatever rules are needed in the hands of persons chosen from among the body politic of the House. The last point may not be an advantage in every sense of the word, but in the long run better cooperation and control are possible when members of the group itself are the ones who interpret necessary restrictions.

Rules and regulations in Libraries generally start with simple directions for the proper and correct use of the services offered. Most of the House Libraries have not been seriously tempted beyond that minimum. There have been times, however, when irritating circumstances have led to expansion of stated rules, which then, as in other libraries, tend to become prolix and tedious codes of laws, cataloguing every imaginable crime against the library, and often listing offenses which do not occur to the potential offender until he reads about them in the rules. Reform movements generally follow, and rules become directions again without losing their dignity or force. House Libraries are fortunate in that they serve only a distinct and quite restricted clientele. When the occasional serious offender does appear he can generally be
recognize in a short time, and dealt with by restricting privileges, or, in extreme cases, by official discipline.

Obviously the most frequent abuse of the Library is the extraction of books without due process of charging records; the usual season for this is just before hour examinations and during the reading periods. Though a small proportion of all the books in the Library are affected during these climactic days, such a crime, and the apparent inefficiency which permitted it, loom very large to other men who need particular books under great pressure. Fines have been charged in some House Libraries in an effort to restrain the wilful offender and tax the careless or indifferent borrower. Apparatus for the proper handling of fine records and the funds thus taken in have usually proved cumbersome and difficult to manage, especially with never more than one attendant at a time regularly on duty and with hourly shifts. It is difficult in a small library, limited in books as well as staff, to determine just how effective a monetary fine really is with reference to the average group of undergraduate readers. Experience has not shown that such a system as could be maintained ever did much to reduce the breaches of law and order which are most troublesome at times of great pressure. It has recently been suggested that fines be entered as official college charges to appear on term bills, giving them a punitive force which it would be difficult to evade or ignore. While this is the standard practice for unpaid fines incurred in the College Library, the accounting necessary to make such charges valid and acceptable to the Comptroller’s Office is considerably beyond the scope of any part-time, student-help library staff. The most effective measure for law enforcement available to student attendants is vigilant attention to what goes on in the library, and particularly vigilant attention to what goes out of it. Devices for the recovery of books are unlikely to be more successful than devices used to prevent their being taken in the first place.

Adams House Library has made effective use of the services of the checker in the dining hall to remind delinquent borrowers that they have books which are needed by others. A list of the borrowers who have failed to return books on reserve before noon is given to the checker, who simply tells the man about his book when he checks in for luncheon. All Houses use a follow-up notice on books kept overtime, usually delivered to the man’s room, or his letter-box, by a library attendant. In urgent cases the Librarian goes to the room and secures the book directly. Leveret House uses a formal notification signed by
the Master for men whose delinquency continues after proper warn-
ing, and ultimately refers the man to the Senior Tutor for disciplinary
action, meanwhile withdrawing library privileges.
In addition to the duties noted above for the maintenance man, he is
also responsible for seeing that books are repaired or rebound when
necessary, and that furniture in the Library is kept in proper condition.
He reports needed replacements or repairs to the Superintendent or the
Master for action. Student help carries the primary burden of admin-
istrative details in operating the House Libraries. Granted a real degree
of inefficiency if compared with professional or trained clerical help,
it is nevertheless true that the success of the House Libraries lies in the
balance which has been achieved between low operating costs and low
efficiency. To raise one would immediately raise the other, and in-
creased costs would tax residents. Outside professional services would
be resented as an intrusion upon the independence of a House function;
conscious standardization would undoubtedly follow, damaging the
individuality of each Library. Undergraduates have enjoyed the use
of intimate library service in their House Libraries with a minimum of
cost and a minimum of formality. The limitations to this service are
of slight consequence under these conditions. Further, there are always
at hand the vast resources of the College Library and of the University
Library in general.

The House Libraries have earned in practice the important place
visualized for them by the men who first planned them, and who
thought of them as vital to the life of each House, the ‘very heart and
center.’ Absence of a definite overall policy in their administration has
permitted a sort of library service in suspense, readily adaptable to
changes in emphasis and demand. In the beginning the requirements of
the tutorial system were effectively met during the period when it was
at its highest development. With its gradual decline in several depa-
tments, other channels opened through which the House Libraries made
less intensive but no less useful contributions to the activities of the
residents. The collections of recorded music are notable evidence of
the kind of service which was rendered during that stage. Following
the war House Library facilities fell into new patterns, carrying the
era burdens with reasonable success and few radical changes. As the
College moves away from the days of accelerated programs new lines
of development are being explored. Leverett House is putting into its
Library an experimental collection of cheap paper-bound reprints of standard classics and popular new books; for a small outlay a wide variety of material can be provided, later to be discarded or replaced as the response of readers may determine. Kirkland House is buying books on hobbies, sports, and pastimes, particularly on topics in which men are likely to be interested at college age, but to which they may never turn at any age unless books about them are readily at hand.

The opening shortly of the Lamont Undergraduate Library will mark another stage in the development of services in the House Libraries. It is appropriate to glance for a moment at the relation between the services we have been describing here and those which Lamont proposes to offer. Each House Library exists only as an integral part of the House to which it belongs. Beyond the general administrative oversight maintained by the Director of the Harvard University Library, each House Library is operated by members of the House under the authority of the Master and a committee of staff and students appointed with his approval. Rules and regulations are formulated within the House, and the expenses necessary for maintaining the Library are a part of the House budget.

The Lamont Library is, on the contrary, a part of the Harvard College Library specially planned to meet the needs of all the undergraduates of the College. Services hitherto provided in the Widener reading room, Boylston, and the Union are now to be expanded and transferred to a separate building for better space and less complicated administration. The special function maintained by the House Libraries will not be superseded by any services to be transferred from Widener to Lamont, or to be developed there; nor will the carefully selected furniture and book collections in Lamont make obsolete the intimate and informal library atmosphere which has become a part of the life in each House.

It is true that an undergraduate may hereafter choose between spending an hour in Lamont or an hour in his House Library with fewer radical differences as to comfort and convenience than have existed between the House Library and Widener. It is true that he will find in Lamont a wider and more easily accessible choice of books than in his House, or ever before in Widener for his particular needs. Nevertheless Lamont cannot operate under the informal administration possible in the House Library with its clientele and services limited to a small group; nor can the House Library ever compete with Lamont's facili-
ties for handling the widely used books under frequent pressure in the big courses. Lamont will exist and function as a part of the Library which serves the whole College and much beyond; House Libraries will continue to carry out their special function within the residential units of which they are essential parts.

It may be of interest at this point to note that extensive use has been made of experience in the House Libraries in planning for Lamont. A union catalogue of the holdings of all House Libraries was brought together more than a year ago to be used as a basic list for the consideration of titles recommended for Lamont. The classification scheme which will be in use in Lamont has been tried out on a smaller scale in the recent reclassification of Kirkland House Library. House Librarians and Tutors interested in the Libraries of the various Houses have been consulted frequently and have given valuable aid in working out details for Lamont.

The friendly obligations thus incurred will be repaid in kind after Lamont begins to operate. Its lists of acquisitions will be available to guide those choosing books for House Libraries, entirely on an optional basis. Such lists will be issued several times a year. Plans have been discussed looking toward the development of a simplified cataloguing service to assist House Librarians with baffling problems in processing their acquisitions, by making available extra copies of the cards prepared for Lamont. Whether or not this feature can be provided for the House Libraries to use, most of the problems which confront a House Librarian at one time or another will be receiving professional treatment in Lamont; here he may observe the solution as it were in a large-scale model, much closer in pattern to his own library than Widener, Boylston, or the Union has ever been.

Lamont will have under its roof the present Farnsworth Room collection for recreational reading, the Poetry Room with its extensive resources for exploring that field through print or recordings, and a carefully selected reference collection. These special collections will supplement a general collection of from thirty to fifty thousand volumes. Taken together the resources of Lamont will offer the undergraduate wider scope and variety than a House Library, but without the bibliographical hazards of the Widener catalogues or the complexities and restrictions of the main stack. Men may then proceed to research problems requiring the full resources of the College Library and the Departmental Libraries throughout the University with a min-
The Libraries of the Harvard Houses

imum of difficulty, and with fuller understanding of the effective use of library tools and facilities.

An undergraduate library of this character may well provide an opportunity for the Houses to develop even more useful services through their Libraries, using the guidance of Lamont in some practices, in other directions going further to develop collections beyond reach while the main effort was influenced by tutorial or other academic requirements. More ephemeral material could wisely be added to the House Libraries if a careful program of discarding were adopted so as to keep the collections reasonably transitory and up to date in those departments more particularly sensitive to the passage of time. Recreational reading is always capable of wider development, and the House Libraries might well become the real points of departure for experiment.

In 1930, when the first of the House Libraries opened, conservative critics questioned the need for the outlay which they represented in a university already so richly equipped for academic pursuits. Lucien Price, '07, gave an eloquent answer in these words: 'It is in the hope of contriving an intellectual climate ever more friendly to that mysterious ferment which here and there causes to rise in some human breast the yeast of a creative life-purpose.' Growing numbers of books and of undergraduates require that those charged with bringing them together must constantly devise new methods to maintain that 'climate' in the expanding universe of college life, and of making it to the best of their ability 'ever more friendly.' Lamont is in its own way another of those endeavors within the frame of the College Library. Outside that framework, working in each of the residential units, the House Libraries will be able to enter upon yet another stage in their adaptation to circumstances. In this perhaps they may be visualized as becoming more and more a part of the facilities provided for undergraduate living; less and less a part of the apparatus for instruction. The books they contain may then be seen not as tools with which instructors teach men a few things, but as windows through which students may discover many things.

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