The Business School Library and its setting

The Harvard community has made this article openly available. Please share how this access benefits you. Your story matters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Citable link</td>
<td><a href="http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:42673667">http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:42673667</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terms of Use</td>
<td>This article was downloaded from Harvard University’s DASH repository, and is made available under the terms and conditions applicable to Other Posted Material, as set forth at <a href="http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:dash.current.terms-of-use#LAA">http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:dash.current.terms-of-use#LAA</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Business School Library
and Its Setting

YOUTHFULNESS carries its disadvantages and problems along with its good points; and no one can be associated for any considerable time with a library devoted to business literature without becoming conscious of the former.

The 'oldest of the arts, but the youngest of the professions' — as President Lowell used to describe the field — possesses largely a modern aspect both on the literary side and on the research side, while the Harvard library that collects in this area is a young institution, at least relative to some of its sisters. All these circumstances create problems.

To be sure, the roots of business literature run back to the 'cradle' days. Pacioli in 1494 first embodied in print a statement of double-entry bookkeeping; Gessler in 1495 published material on business forms then in use in southern Germany; and no doubt the early arithmetics were evoked quite as much for commercial as for general educational purposes. Then there is no inconsiderable assembly of items pertaining to the early trading companies of England and other parts of Europe, to the speculative 'bubbles' that broke in 1720, or to the morality of business activities, from the controversies over usury downward until such activities seem almost wholly to have become secularized in Defoe's Complete English Tradesman (first edition, 1726).

However, the volume of business printing may in imagination be likened roughly to a champagne glass. Despite the accretion of price-currents, of trade periodicals, and (at least for this country) of corporation documents in the middle half of the nineteenth century, the volume of output flares out prodigiously from about 1890 onward — and hasn't ceased flaring!

In this period have come most notably the first scientific treatments of business subjects, but likewise a tremendously enhanced outflow of advertising 'literature,' of financial journals and 'services,' of documents from trade associations large and small, of corporation reports and financial instruments, of business directories, while a library operating in this field cannot fail to be affected by the contemporary expansion of governmental publications aimed at assisting business enter-

332
prises, controlling them, or sometimes destroying them. A variety of forces from the development of national markets by national merchants to technological advances in the printing arts have conspired to deluge this country—and only to lesser degree other countries—with an almost inconceivable torrent of printed materials more or less closely related to business.²

This circumstance has conditioned, and still continues to condition, the operations of the Business School Library. It is necessary to be highly selective. In a world where business directories are published from Boston to Ceylon, where several thousand ‘house organs’ are issued by American corporations alone,³ or where daily reports are printed on behalf of many stock-and-bond exchanges—not to mention the sales ‘literature’ of security distributors, commodity distributors, and the like—one can surely assert that the Baker Library, though the largest unified assembler of business materials, refuses to collect many more items than it accepts.

In no other field of literature is the problem of collection quite similar. In imagination, an approach might be conceived if a library of English literature were thought of as trying to assemble all the ‘pulp’ magazines that monthly (or more frequently) decorate the shelves of shoe-shining ‘parlors’ and comparable emporia. Even the Law School Library, despite its wide interest in the world’s legislation and court decisions, has a somewhat more limited problem. At least it possesses a more immediate basis of selection than exists in the business world.

Newness (or relative newness), however, colors more than the literary aspect of a business library’s problem. Research in the field of business is also new—and in two senses. Assuredly it is an activity notable only in the past two or three decades; but also it concerns itself almost exclusively with contemporary topics. Consciousness of a respectable past—perhaps a past worth examining and writing about—has been a growth of quite recent years, aided no little by the research in business history which the Business School has fostered.⁴

One consequence of this situation for the Business School’s library

---

²There are 1,700 American periodicals and newspapers now being published in the field of business alone.

³A total of 5,100 are listed in the latest tabulation by Printers’ Ink.

⁴It is likewise an index of the relative youth of business literature that few indeed are the authors whose writings are worth collecting for the purpose of studying their lives and their productions. We have no John Donne or Percy Shelley, no Scott or Thackeray or Whittier. Here there is no guide to collection of materials.
is that it must largely ‘build ahead of demand’ as far as historical items are concerned. Its Kress Collection, housing one of the largest assemblies of printed materials on business and economic history, its somewhat comparable Aldrich Room devoted to American historical materials, the earlier sections of its corporation records collection, its archive of original business documents, even the European material in its regular stacks, are all less actively employed than one may anticipate for later years. Here the Business School Library is following a good Harvard tradition. It is building a broad research institution which will serve scholars of wide interests over indefinite periods of the future.

The advent of instruction at Harvard in business subjects which, with the rising flood of business literature, led to the creation of the Baker Library, came late in Harvard history and accordingly brought the necessity of adjusting the new-sprung institution to a library system that had been evolving over many decades. The subject of business administration has many affinities with the older one of economics, while it possesses other ties with law, government, psychology, social history, even with general literature (through novels or plays dealing with business themes). Happily a boundary line—somewhat jagged in spots, to be sure—has been worked out between the Baker Library, on one hand, and the other Harvard libraries, on the other, whereby each institution contains and collects those types of publications which are most called for by its clientele and which the visiting research student would expect to find on its shelves. Thus, in the field of the governmental regulation of business, the Harvard College Library collects materials—including political and economic theory—related to the formulation and passage of legislation; the Law School Library assembles the statutes, administrative regulations flowing from general laws, and court decisions interpreting both of such groups; while the Business School Library, taking the statutes and regulations as given data, devotes its particular attention to the effect of governmental action upon business operations. Some overlapping, of course, is inevitable, but duplication is kept to a minimum, and each body of students and attendant faculty is well served.4

Finally, it may be noted that the newness of business literature and of the Baker Library has consequences upon the methods of operation in the latter. By reason of the recent large growth of business litera-

4Exceptional cases of overlapping research work are covered by inter-library loans.
ture, bibliographical tools in the area are less sufficient for student or scholarly needs than in the fields of law, ‘English literature’ proper, and many other segments of knowledge. Reference work for students and faculty, for businessmen near and far, and for distant scholars bulks larger at the Baker Library than in most other Harvard library institutions. Again, the Baker Library has been compelled to devise and employ its own classification of business items. Or, once more, the division of its proper sphere of collecting from that of other, older Harvard library units and the huge volume of inflowing materials have occasioned the formulation of several hundred detailed decisions—that, for example, the Baker Library will collect the histories of business enterprises but not general industrial or local histories, or that it will collect only those railroad rules of operation which pre-date 1890, or corporation reports for selected lists of companies only—in faithful pursuance of which alone can the Library keep within its predetermined boundaries and prevent an inundation of its limited shelving by materials of little (or no) value.

However, one should not give the impression that the Baker Library is so overwhelmed by problems of propriety or those of discrimination that it stands handcuffed and immobile. Having worked through these difficulties, it now operates with the same freedom that each individual enjoys with recognition of self-imposed restraints. It is the recognized repository of the University’s material on business and economic history prior to 1850; it collects systematically in the area of corporation literature; it pursues such modern materials as those concerned with the business aspects of aviation or the management phase of industrial relations; and generally it seeks to collect and preserve all worthwhile items relative to American and foreign business administration. Within its prescribed area, it seeks to rank with the other Harvard libraries as a research institution—for both contemporary and historical inquiries—second to none anywhere.

The evolution which has brought the Baker Library to its present status as the largest unified collection in the literature of business has not lacked elements of romance. The first dean of the School, Edwin F. Gay, and the first small faculty were distinctly book-conscious, but the most that they could achieve before the first World War was a reading room. (Of course, secondary business literature was scarce

forty years ago, and primary materials could best be retained in the stacks of the Harvard College Library.)

The reading room moved from the crowded Gore Hall to space in Lawrence Hall that the School of Education could spare, and ultimately to the top floor of the new Widener building. Here the second stage of metamorphosis began after 1926, under the energetic leadership of Dean Wallace B. Donham and of the previous Librarian, Mr Charles C. Eaton. Soon the Business School reading room was overflowing into other space, even invading the quiet of the Classics Department and placing work-tables out in the corridors. Again, one collection was housed in the basement of the Semitic Museum. The officials of the University Library undoubtedly heaved a sigh of relief when the adolescent institution moved in 1927 its rapidly growing materials into its own building across the Charles. There, to be sure, the expansion continued, but in more orderly fashion and at least without disturbance to other parts of the University.

The general outlines of the Business School Library had already been established when it found more ‘Lebensraum’ in the Baker building. In good Harvard tradition, the decision had been reached that its collections should have historical roots and not be a mere selection of contemporary literature. Likewise, the determination had been made that its assembly should include primary as well as secondary materials. Thirdly, the view was entertained that the sights of the institution should be set high enough to keep it from too great provincialism: the better foreign items should be added to the purely American. In a sense these three basic decisions — all true to Harvard precepts — have ruled the life of the Baker Library in later years — at least in so far as its activities have extended beyond providing adequate, usually bountiful reading matter for the immediate use of students and faculty in connection with class work.

Throughout the Library, from its regular stacks to its Aviation Collection, roots stretch back into the past. The Kress and Aldrich Rooms are devoted to such ‘roots’ — one primarily concerned with European items (and reaching back to the ‘cradle-days’ of business literature above mentioned) and the other attending to American imprints. Again, the Corporation Records Division, with its collection of the

*The Library now contains nearly 300,000 volumes and something like a million pamphlets — the latter chiefly in its Corporation Records Division — plus a large and bulky collection of business manuscripts.
annual reports, indentures, and similar financial documents of American and foreign corporations, has built up files that go back to the beginnings of such publications, while the Manuscript Division is wholly 'historical;' since it houses account books, letter books, and related materials of past business enterprises.

Operating, as it were, in a second dimension, the collecting activities at the Baker Library have aimed at primary or 'source' materials. Most historical items, to be sure, now constitute 'source' literature of a sort, since they have to be scanned and digested for the preparation of interpretative monographs; what is more particularly meant are those materials which are in their nature raw and unitary. Such may be considered the annual reports of corporations—of which the Library attempts to secure each year the issues of nearly 2,500 leading American companies and a number of foreign enterprises. Another variety is constituted of the tons of business manuscripts which the Library has acquired and now preserves. Likewise, one would include the trade periodicals from the earliest prices-current to the last issue of the Textile World, the daily reports of the New York Stock Exchange, and scores of other non-scientific serials. Materials of this sort serve the student of contemporary affairs while, preserved by the Library, they continue to supply raw data for the historian.

The proper geographical purview of the Library—a third dimension, as it were—raises a series of difficult questions not unconnected with the problem of published bulk discussed earlier. Foreign literature of historical dating is not a quantitative problem, at least until one reaches a period of fifty or seventy-five years ago. Thereafter one must make selections from the total literature, since no single American library can hope to house all the output of all the business presses over recent decades. The Business School Library should have daily reports of the New York Stock Exchange and of the New York Curb Exchange; probably also equivalent reports from Boston, Chicago, and perhaps San Francisco; but should it likewise seek and preserve corresponding materials from the London Stock Exchange, those at Paris, Amsterdam, Berlin, Vienna, Tokyo, and Melbourne? Again the Business School Library should have annual reports of the principal chambers of commerce in this country and perhaps reports of the corresponding institutions in the leading mercantile capitals of the world from London to Shanghai; but should it also acquire and preserve equivalent documents from the chambers of commerce in Aachen
and Bloemfontein and Vera Cruz, let alone the Italian chamber of commerce in Argentina or the French chamber of commerce in Madras—and hundreds of similar series?

Actually, the Business School has formulated a rough ranging of foreign countries and foreign cities, for which the importance of the area or community for American trade is the chief criterion. Thus the Library collects more largely materials of all sorts relating to Canada, England, France, Germany, Russia, and the ABC Powers in South America than it does of Hungary, Norway, Paraguay, and many other areas. Again, for materials on particular commercial ports, London, Liverpool, Rio de Janeiro, and Canton are placed ahead of such less important places as Lisbon, Cape Town, or Brisbane. In short, all that seems possible is to establish certain crude working-rules which tend to bring in the more significant materials and progressively to shut out the less useful series and items as the points of origin become business-wise more distant from the United States.

Thus the seed planted by Dean Gay in a reading room for the literature available in 1908 has grown under the favoring circumstances of his and his successors’ scholarly interests to become an institution which both in its size and purposes deserves a modest place among the older and renowned libraries of Harvard University. From within the Business School itself, encouragement for the future derives from the active interest of Dean David and the stamp of approval which the faculty of the School has placed upon the Library’s general policies. Accordingly, cheered by that thought it has already achieved something of a distinct flavor among library institutions of the country, and looks forward to increasing service to scholars and businessmen alike.

Arthur H. Cole
CONTENTS

HAMILTON VAUGHAN BAIL, Views of Harvard to 1860: An Iconographic Study — Parts I-III 11, 185, 339

WILLIAM BERRIEN, The Modern Language Center 396

JOHN H. BIRKS, The Story of Toby, a Sequel to Typee 118

WILLIAM H. BOND, Nancy Oldfield: An Unrecorded Printed Play by Charles Reade 386

WILLIAM H. BOND, Wordsworth's Thanksgiving Ode: An Unpublished Postscript 115

EDWIN G. BORING, The Library of the Psychological Laboratories 394

ETHEL B. CLARK, A Manuscript of John Keats at Dumbarton Oaks 90

I. BERNARD COHEN, A Lost Letter from Hobbes to Mersenne Found 112

ARTHUR H. COLE, The Business School Library and Its Setting 332

C. LESLIE CRAIG, The Earliest Little Gliding Concordance 311

Exhibitions, 1946 123

REGINALD FITZ, President Eliot and Dr. Holmes Leap Forward 212

EVA FLEISCHNER, Napoleon to His Mother: The First Draft of a Letter Written from School 244

LOUISE B. GRAVES, The Likeness of Emily Dickinson 248

ELMER M. GRIEGER, The Collecting of War Agency Material at Harvard 111

Guides to the Harvard Libraries 323

The Harvard Keats Memorial Studies 323

The Harvard-Newberry Calligraphic Series 262

PHILIP HOFER, The Graphic Arts Department: An Experiment in Specialization 252

PHILIP HOFER, A Newly Discovered Book with Painted Decorations from Willibald Pirckheimer's Library 66

WILLIAM A. JACKSON, The Carl T. Keller Collection of Don Quixote 305

WILLIAM A. JACKSON, The First Separately Printed English Translation of Horace 238

WILLIAM A. JACKSON, Humphrey Dyson and His Collections of Elizabethan Proclamations 76

HAROLD S. JANTZ, A Funeral Elegy for Thomas Danforth, Treasurer of Harvard 211

FRANK N. JONES, Harvard's Importation of Foreign Books since the War 256

OTTO KINKELDEY, Franchino Gaffori and Marsilio Ficino 379

RUPERT B. LILLIE, The Historical Series of Harvard Dioramas 391

List of Contributors 127, 264, 399
THOMAS LITTLE, The Thomas Wolfe Collection of William B. Wisdom 280
ROBERT W. LOVETT, The Undergraduate and the Harvard Library, 1877–1937 221
PHILIP J. MCNIFF, Reading Room Problems in the Harvard College Library, 1942–1947 254
FRANCIS P. MAGOUN, JR, Photostats of the Historia de Preliis Alexandri Magni (18) 377
KEYES D. METCALF, Foreword 5
KEYES D. METCALF, Spatial Growth in University Libraries 133
KEYES D. METCALF, The Undergraduate and the Harvard Library, 1765–1877 29
KEYES D. METCALF, The Undergraduate and the Harvard Library, 1937–1947 288
AGNES MONGAN, A Group of Newly Discovered Sixteenth-Century French Portrait Drawings 155
AGNES MONGAN, A Group of French Portrait Drawings — Addendum 397
NEW CATALOGUES OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS 262
NATALIE N. NICHOLSON, The Engineering Library at Harvard University 387
MAXWELL E. PERRINS, Thomas Wolfe 269
FRED N. ROBINSON, Celtic Books at Harvard: The History of a Departmental Collection 52
HYDER E. ROLINS, An O. Henry Cocktail 119
ADRIANA R. SALEM, The Purchases of a Seventeenth-Century Librarian 241
SALES OF DUPLICATE BOOKS 261
CLIFFORD K. SHIPTON, The Collections of the Harvard University Archives 176
CLIFFORD K. SHIPTON, The Harvard University Archives: Goal and Function 101
STAFF ACTIVITIES 260
THE THEATRE COLLECTION IN NEW QUARTERS 261
WILLIAM VAN LENNEP, The Earliest Known English Playbill 382
WILLIAM VAN LENNEP, John Adams to a Young Playwright 317
THOMAS WOLFE and MAXWELL E. PERRINS, The Last Letter of Thomas Wolfe, and the Reply to It 278