CONSERVATION GUIDELINES
HCL Environmental Monitoring Program

(For reader-occupied library buildings; not for specialized or off-site storage)

Maintenance of stable temperature and relative humidity (RH) levels in the Harvard College Library (HCL) is an important step towards achieving the comprehensive preservation of the Library’s collections. Excessive heat and moisture contribute directly to the accelerated degradation of materials and, in the extreme, may cause mold growth. Clean, cool, dry conditions benefit the long-term preservation of all collection materials. For these reasons creating an environmental monitoring program is fundamental to the stewardship of HCL collections.

The goal of the HCL environmental monitoring program is to provide ongoing evaluation of the temperature and RH in the HCL libraries by regularizing data collection and reporting. The program accomplishes this goal by placing environmental monitoring devices strategically throughout the libraries in order to establish baseline temperature and RH conditions. The data from these monitors is then compared to recommended set points for reader-occupied library buildings (68-74 °F and 30-40% RH). Goals for the improvement of environmental conditions recognize that library environments must be comfortable for readers, and take into account the needs of specific types of collection materials, seasonal variations in temperature and RH, the overall condition of a building, and energy saving strategies employed by the University.

Data is downloaded monthly from environmental monitoring devices at Cabot Science Library, the Fine Arts Library, Government Documents (Lamont, lower level), Harvard-Yenching Library, Lamont Library, Littauer Library, Loeb Music Library, Quad Library, and Tozzer Library. Reports about the environment are generated quarterly and are distributed to a designated liaison in each library and to the appropriate facilities manager.

For more information about the program, please contact:
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