Chronology of Events in Library Preservation at Harvard

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1638: John Harvard bequeathed half his money and his entire library (several hundred volumes) to the recently founded college in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The college was re-named for him. Other donations quickly followed.

1638-1642: Harvard’s first academic building was constructed. Often it was referred to simply as “The College” or “Old College.” The library (still under 1,000 volumes) occupied a room on the second floor. Poorly constructed, the building began to deteriorate: the roof decayed, the floors sagged, and wind blew through cracks in the walls.¹

1667: The first Library Laws addressed problems such as security and collections care. A patron who damaged or failed to return a book was obligated to pay double the cost of the book and may have had borrowing rights revoked. Library records, manuscripts, and “books of extraordinary value” were kept under tighter security than the regular collection. During this period, a new Library Keeper was appointed every two years. It was his responsibility that “the Library be kept in good repair, that no damage come to any of the books by the weather or want of convenient shelving &c. Also he shall keep the Library duly swept, & the books clean & orderly in their places.” Solomon Stoddard was the first Librarian of Harvard.²

1671-8: Harvard Hall (or “New College”) was built to hold the library, a collection of scientific apparatus, a chapel, dormitories, a kitchen, and a buttery. The library was transferred to Harvard Hall from the collapsing Old College building.³

1682: John Cotton, Librarian of Harvard, suggested at a Corporation meeting that “double books”—or multiple copies—be sold in order to buy other books for the Library.⁴

1700s: The library continued to be housed on the second floor of Harvard Hall. In 1723, the library contained 3,500 volumes. There were two library collections—one for

“common use” and one for valuable and restricted books. These were referred to as the “smaller” and “great” libraries, respectively. Since later librarians suggested just such an arrangement, it seems likely that the division was not adequately clear.⁵

**1719:** An important early book donor was Thomas Hollis (1659-1731), whose brothers, nephew, and heirs would also be important donors to Harvard. In 1719, he sent his first gift of books.⁶

**1721-1722:** Joshua Gee, Librarian of Harvard, prepared a printed catalog of the library. It described the arrangement of books in numbered cases, each case with seven shelves, each book individually numbered.⁷

**June 1725:** In a letter, Thomas Hollis (1659-1731) expressed concern about the liberal borrowing policies of the Harvard Library: “Your library is reckoned here to be ill managed, by the account I have of some that know it, you want seats to sit and read, and chains to your valuable books like our Bodleian library, or Sion College in London, you know their methods, wch are approved, but do not imitate them, you let your books be taken at pleasure home to Men’s houses, and many are lost, your (boyish) Students take them to their chambers, and tear out pictures & maps to adorne their Walls, such things are not good; if you want roome for modern books, it is easy to remove the less usefull into a more remote place, but not to sell any, they are devoted.”⁸

**1736:** The Corporation approved a new set of Library Laws. These rules laid out stricter regulations about who might check out books and for how long; generally, three books could be borrowed for three weeks at a time. In addition to previous rules about replacing damaged books, a new rule specified that stealing a book would result in expulsion. A new Library Keeper would be appointed annually. His duties included keeping the building and the books clean. Only he and the President should have copies of the key to the library.⁹

**1737-1738:** While Thomas March was Librarian of Harvard, a vote was taken “to provide Boxes for the Books in the Library, fitted wrth handles &c wrby the said Library may be Speedily & Safely remov’d in case of Fire.”¹⁰

**24-25 January, 1764:** The General Court of Massachusetts held session at Harvard Hall during a smallpox outbreak in Boston. A fire began in the library and spread, destroying

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¹⁰ Ibid., 22.
the Hall; severe winter weather hindered firefighting efforts. Most of the library collection (5,000 volumes) was lost. About 400 books survived: they were either out on loan or in boxes, waiting to be unpacked. President Edward Holyoke wrote: “In a very short time, this venerable Monument of the Piety of our Ancestors was turn’d into a heap of ruins.” Early Harvard records were saved because they were stored in President Holyoke’s office in Wadsworth House. The General Court paid to rebuild Harvard Hall and donated a “water engine” for future firefighting efforts. The library collection grew by donation in the following years.  

1765: The president and fellows approved a new set of Library Laws. The Librarian (no longer referred to as “Library Keeper”) should be appointed for no more than three years. He was responsible for keeping the building aired, swept, and dusted. A fire should be lit once a month from October to April, but the Librarian must monitor it and make sure it is properly extinguished. Juniors may now borrow books from the library, a privilege previously reserved for seniors. It was easier to borrow books from the “smaller” library of books for common use, but it was also possible for these students to borrow from the “great” library with permission from the proper authority figures. Each year, every borrower must return his books to the library by the end of June, so they can be dusted and inspected. It was now explicitly forbidden to bring a candle or a lamp into the library.  

1764-1766: The second Harvard Hall was built. (It still stands today albeit heavily renovated and expanded.) The library collection, organized in alcoves denoted by the names of major donors, took up half of the second floor of this building. Early shelf-lists and catalogues were attempts to keep track of the growing collection. Certain books of philosophy and medicine were prohibited to students.  

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1775: The Harvard University Archives holds an invoice from “Barclay’s” (possibly Andrew Barclay, a Boston bookbinder) for binding and covering a number of books in calf and sheepskin. Total cost: £13:2:7.14

1775: The Provincial Congress commandeered the buildings of Harvard College as quarters for the continental army. Samuel Phillips, Jr. described packing books for wartime storage during the Battle of Bunker Hill: “Amid all the terrors of battle I was so busily engaged in Harvard Library that I never even heard of the engagement (I mean the siege) until it was completed.” In June 1775, the books were moved to Andover and subsequently to Concord, where the library was temporarily located in a private home. The Corporation also voted to send the College’s fire engine to Concord. After the British evacuated Boston in March 1776, the Provincial Congress granted Harvard permission to return to Cambridge.15

1793: The salary paid to the Harvard Librarian increased, on the condition that he or a staff member would open the library during vacations.16

1790s-1810s: Borrowing privileges were gradually expanded to include sophomores and freshmen. Students might borrow books from the library on specific days of the month, but did not have access to the entire library collection.17

1815: In a letter to President John T. Kirkland, Librarian Andrews Norton advocated for both a general collection of “common books for circulation among the students” and a collection “where valuable and rare books are deposited for preservation.” Norton recommended purchasing lower-quality editions for regular use by students, who sometimes damaged or made marks in the books. He understood the mission of the library to be two-fold: preserving books and benefiting students. Norton believed that these goals could be accomplished by having two distinct libraries.18

1815: With the commons and chapel transferred from Harvard Hall to University Hall, the first floor of Harvard Hall was devoted to classrooms and laboratories. The library now occupied the entire second floor.\(^{19}\)

1818: The Harvard Library was under-funded and therefore unable to purchase many books during this period. Israel Thorndike donated the Ebeling collection of maps and Americana, one of the most valuable gifts the library had yet received.\(^{20}\)

1822: Joseph Green Cogswell, briefly Librarian of Harvard, questioned whether the library’s priority should really be to provide books to undergraduates. He would have preferred to build a collection for scholars, and he wrote in a letter to the Harvard Corporation that “no library book should be allowed to be used as a class book under any circumstances, such a use being wholly inconsistent with its proper preservation.”\(^{21}\)

1820s-1830s: President Josiah Quincy repeatedly expressed concern about the vulnerability of the library to fire due to its proximity to Hollis Hall, a residential building in which students often kept fires. Student revolts in the 1830s resulted in bonfires, explosions, and vandalism, all of which posed a threat to irreplaceable collections. Quincy referred to the fire of 1764 as precedent and hoped that “friends of the University,” in the private sector or in the government, would help fund the construction of a new building and prevent the destruction of irreplaceable collections.\(^{22}\)

1831: President Quincy expressed concern about the crowding of books in the library. There were too many books for the space. This meant that the alcoves were full and the books were held on shelves constructed in the middle of several rooms. Quincy was concerned that this arrangement would be inconvenient to patrons and might result in “damage and even loss” of the books.\(^{23}\)

1838-1841: Gore Hall was constructed on the current site of Widener Library. It was the first Harvard building to be used exclusively as a library. Modeled after King’s College Chapel in Cambridge, England, Gore Hall was widely considered a beautiful building. Its materials—granite (from President Quincy’s quarry) and iron—were intended to minimize the danger of fire. However, the building was ill-suited to Harvard’s ever-growing collections. It was poorly lit, poorly ventilated, and it soon became overcrowded.


\(^{22}\) See Josiah Quincy’s annual reports of this period (in the *Annual Report of the President of Harvard University to the Overseers on the state of the university*). Quincy expresses particular concern between 1828 and 1833. See also Robert A. McCaughey, *Josiah Quincy, 1772-1864: The Last Federalist* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), 148-162.

with books. Concerns about fire meant that artificial light was largely forbidden, limiting hours of access. Moisture caused frost to form in the winter and mold to grow in the spring. The stucco on its interior walls eroded, creating dust. Gore Hall was heated by means of an early—and inadequate—system of steam heating; readers often needed to wear coats in the winter. 

1841: John Langdon Sibley began his thirty-six year tenure as Assistant Librarian and then Librarian of Harvard. (He also worked for the Harvard Library in 1825-1826.) His collection development strategy was based on the theory that every item may one day be valuable. His systematic requests for donations caused books and ephemera to accumulate in the library, contributing to the over-crowding of Gore Hall. On July 11, 1846, Sibley wrote in his journal: “Let the library be filled. If trash comes let it come. What is trash to me may be the part of the Library which will be the most valuable to another person.”

Late 1840s: President Edward Everett noted the growth in the size and quality of the library collections. He regreted the lack of funds available to keep the library “in perfect condition” and wished that students did not have to be charged a fee to use the collections. He suggested the establishment of a working collection for undergraduates, which would be housed in a building separate from the general library. The general library would remain “a repository of the rarer works in every department of science and literature.” In the meantime, Gore Hall had an anteroom of books for undergraduate use.

1848: Walter Mitchell, Class of 1846, complained in a letter to President Everett that undergraduates were granted too little time in the library and such minimal access to the books that it was difficult for them to learn. He believed that students were unfairly suspected of theft and vandalism. He wished that the College Library offered the same type of liberal access that the Law School Library did. Everett answered with a brief note, saying that it would be ideal to make the library more open, but that it already was more accessible than equivalent European and American libraries.

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26 Metcalf, “The Undergraduate and the Harvard Library, 1765-1877,” 50; Elkins, “Foreshadowings of Lamont: Student Proposals in the Nineteenth Century,” 42. See also Edward Everett’s annual reports of this period (in the Annual Report of the President of Harvard University to the Overseers on the state of the university).

1850-1851: Manuscript papers relating to the earliest days of Harvard were discovered to have suffered damage and losses during storage in Gore Hall. The Corporation decided to have them classified, arranged, and bound, “for their preservation and for preventing future loss.” They would be stored in a safe in the President’s office in University Hall. This event constituted the formation of Harvard’s first Archives.  

1856: John Langdon Sibley, previously Assistant Librarian, became Librarian of Gore Hall. Despite the resistance of President Walker, Sibley increased the building’s storage capacity by installing movable shelves in the alcoves. Sibley began to employ women in the library, first to clean books and then to work on the catalogue (a women’s restroom was added in 1860). Harvard students and young boys were often hired to dust the books.  

1856-1857: Francis C. Gray bequeathed his collection of engravings to Harvard. His nephew, William Gray, established conditions for the bequest, including a requirement that the collection would be kept with special care for “security against fire and other injury.” By 1896 the engravings had become the responsibility of the Fogg Art Museum, where they were stored in “dust-proof cases, of handsome quartered oak with interior fittings of Spanish cedar.”  

1857-1860: Harvard undergraduates submitted two proposals requesting better library facilities. A committee appointed by the Faculty suggested that, if particularly valuable books were locked up and patrons were inspected at the exit, Gore Hall’s alcoves could be opened to undergraduates. Sibley resisted, reasoning that increased access would cause damage to the books and inconvenience to the staff. A compromise was reached: library hours were extended, the hours during which books could be borrowed were extended, and current periodicals were made available (before they were bound). The alcoves remained off-limits to undergraduates.  

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1858: During this period the library was inspected every year. All books were recalled and shelved. John Langdon Sibley noted (on June 23) that there were “fifty-seven persons delinquent, among the worst of whom are some of the College Officers.”

1859: John Langdon Sibley hired John Maccarty, who subsequently trained as a bookbinder. Sibley hoped to establish a small workshop and bindery in which Maccarty could do binding work for the library, and thereby save money on binding costs. However, Maccarty died before this plan could become a reality.

1860s-1870s: There was ongoing concern about crowding of books in Gore Hall. Thefts in the library could sometimes be traced to students, but more often to collectors.

1865: A fireproof building (funded by Nathaniel Thayer) was built to house Asa Gray’s herbarium and botanical library.

1865: According to President Thomas Hill, Gore Hall was under-funded and the collections were suffering as a result. There was not enough money “to keep the bindings in repair,” let alone to purchase new books. The building was full of books, with no room for people. Many parts of the building were damp, hastening the books’ decay.

October 1868: Charles Ammi Cutter wrote of the Harvard College Library that the “original restrictions on its use—restrictions made apparently in the interest of a remote posterity, from a fear that too much reading would wear out the books—are disappearing one by one.” The library was open for longer hours and the improved catalogue (Cutter’s own work) provided better access to books.

1869-1870: Some repairs were made to Gore Hall. Attempts were made to decrease dampness (by increasing ventilation) and to protect the building against the possibility of fire.

1860s-1870s: The Theological Library’s collection continued to improve in quality, producing concern about the collection’s safety from fire.

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34 Ibid., 252.
36 Ibid., 8.
39 See Oliver Stearns’s annual reports of this period (in the Annual Report of the President of Harvard University to the Overseers on the state of the university).
1871: President Charles W. Eliot explained the purchase of sixteen acres of land in Cambridge as security against the spreading of fires from buildings grouped too close to one another. He believed that all future construction at Harvard should be done in stone. Eliot also expressed the need for fireproof libraries for the Divinity School and the Medical Museum. The Great Chicago Fire of 1871 and the Great Boston Fire of 1872 would seem to justify his concerns.\(^{40}\)

1871: The architecture firm Ware and Van Brunt began plans and estimates for an enlargement of Gore Hall. President Eliot believed that Gore Hall’s problems, specifically, overcrowding and dampness, could be solved, and that the building should be kept exactly where it was, since it was safe from the spread of fire.\(^{41}\)

1871-1872: For the first time, the Theological Library would be overseen by a non-student. The Faculty hoped that this change would deter book theft. The librarian proceeded to increase the security of the collection.\(^{42}\)

1871: For the first time, the Law School Library would be overseen by a non-student. The library was divided into a “working library” for high-demand and reference books, and a “general library” for duplicates and less-used books. Access to the general library required permission. From the 1870s to the 1890s, the library purchased numerous duplicate copies of much-used items and greatly increased the amount of money it spent on binding and repairs. Greater attention was paid to the materials and methods used in binding.\(^{43}\)

1875: Books were piled on the floors of Gore Hall. There was not enough space in the library for books, patrons, and employees. Professor Henry Adams and a number of students from the History Department submitted a petition to the Corporation of the College, requesting more space in which to consult books. The petition led to a


\(^{41}\) Ibid., 40-42.


rearrangement of an area of the library that had previously been filled with exhibit cases.  

26 January 1876: A fire in Hollis Hall prompted Harvard to construct a water main with four hydrants and to acquire several fire ladders for Harvard Yard.  

1876-1877: The construction of a fireproof wing to Gore Hall, with self-supporting iron stacks, briefly relieved space problems in the library. These were the first such stacks to be built in America. John Langdon Sibley strongly advocated for a new building instead of an enlargement, but was overruled by President Eliot. 

1877: Justin Winsor became Librarian of Harvard. He eliminated the annual recall of books and stopped the practice of closing the library for cleaning. Students could acquire tickets that give them limited access to the stacks, a result of Winsor’s belief in the importance of contact with books. In 1883, the annual examination of the books was reinstated and supplemented by regular shelf-reading by staff. 

1878: Justin Winsor believed that the great number of serials and pamphlets requiring binding or rebinding suggested the need for a University bindery similar to the one with which he was familiar at the Boston Public Library. The bindery could use high-quality materials, do efficient work, and provide better security for rare items.

Late 1870s: Environmental conditions at Dane Hall were deleterious to the books of the Law School Library. They became dusty when windows were open in the summer, were injured by exposure to gaslight, and were damaged by extreme changes in temperature. Furthermore, the library was over-stuffed with books and was not fireproof. 

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46 Ibid., 26-27; Carpenter, The First 350 Years of the Harvard University Library, 74.
50 See C. C. Langdell’s annual reports of this period. For example, C. C. Langdell, “The Law School,” Annual Reports of the President and Treasurer of Harvard College 1877-1878 (1879): 87.
1879: The “Harvard Annex”—renamed Radcliffe College in 1894—was founded. Its students had access to a reference library, which grew rapidly by means of gifts and purchases. A messenger retrieved books from Gore Hall so that Annex students could consult them. Some female students were given access to Gore Hall.  

1879-1880: Subject-specific books were transferred from Gore Hall to the new, fireproof Herbarium Library. Conversely, books were transferred from the Theological Library—which was not fireproof—to Gore Hall.  

1880-1881: The cellar of Gore Hall was expanded into storage space for newspapers.  


Late 1880s-early 1890s: Gore Hall did not have electrical lighting, and so it often needed to close before 4:00 pm on dark winter afternoons. The plaster walls and fixtures were crumbling. On Thanksgiving Day, 1889, “a fifty-pound corner ornament” fell in the reading room. President Eliot and Justin Winsor would have liked to make the entire building fireproof, add new stacks, and create a new reading room.  

Late 1880s-1890s: Concerns grew about the danger of fire at the Observatory and the potential destruction of thousands of unique photographic plates and manuscripts.  

1889-1890: Fay House, the main building of the Harvard Annex—renamed Radcliffe College in 1894—was expanded. The building was equipped with a “noiseless fan” that introduced hot or cool air, as well as a ventilator in the roof. The library was on the third floor. It was lit by windows, a skylight, and gas jets when necessary. There was an open fireplace. The collection continued to grow, and within a few years Radcliffe began to  

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need a larger, fireproof space. Students of the Annex continued to make regular use of Gore Hall.\textsuperscript{57}

**1890s:** The same cases were regularly assigned to large classes at the Law School; heavy use did damage to library collections. Duplicate copies alleviated the problem somewhat.\textsuperscript{58}

**January 1891:** The President and Fellows of Harvard College voted to grant students of the Harvard Annex—renamed Radcliffe College in 1894—continued access to the books in Gore Hall. This access was primarily provided via messenger service between Gore Hall and Fay House.\textsuperscript{59}

**February 1891:** The Library Council limited access to the shelves of Gore Hall due to frequent misplacement and losses of books, some at the hands of a professional thief. Justin Winsor acknowledged that making the collection entirely secure from theft would restrict access in a way that would be inconvenient to patrons.\textsuperscript{60}

**1891-1892:** Winsor expressed concerns about reports of both patrons and staff lighting matches in order to see better in dark areas of Gore Hall.\textsuperscript{61}

**Spring 1894:** 15,000 books—selected due to low circulation—were boxed and stored in the cellar of Appleton Chapel. Demand for their return to Gore Hall was nearly immediate. In December, the books were made accessible when they were transferred to the Theological Library.\textsuperscript{62}

**1895:** Interior renovations of Gore Hall began. Features included a new roof with skylights, a three-story iron book stack, and a new reading room (which would be open


\textsuperscript{60} Justin Winsor, “The Library,” *Annual Reports of the President and Treasurer of Harvard College 1890-1891* (1892): 143-146.


until 10:00 pm). The building was wired for electrical lighting. During construction, many books were stored in Perkins Hall and Massachusetts Hall. Frank Carney (who worked in the Shelf Department) described the transport of books in 5-foot-long boxes with iron handles, in which the books are arranged in shelf order.

1895-1896: The old boiler room of Gore Hall was converted into a newspaper room with “steel roller shelves.”

Summer 1896: Construction added two new stories and electric lights to the Law School Library.

1897-1898: The reading room of Gore Hall was poorly ventilated and very uncomfortable in the summer. A rotary ventilating fan, designed to pump warm air into the room in the winter and to draw warm air out of the room in the summer, was installed. It was apparently ineffectual.

Summer 1898: Radcliffe College undertook renovations to a wall of Fay House, due to concerns that the weight of books in the third-floor library might do structural damage to the building.

1897-1898: The Fogg Art Museum instituted regulations and record-keeping for use of its collections of prints and engravings. Permission was required to consult and copy materials; only pencils were allowed for note-taking; visitors must sign in and be supervised during use.

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1898-1899: President Eliot began to use the term “dead books” to describe those books in a library that were seldom or never used. He believed that they should not be stored with the “living” collection (which was used primarily by “young men”), but rather elsewhere—either in more compact storage or somewhere off-site. William Coolidge Lane, Librarian of Harvard, would come to acknowledge that off-site storage was a better option than overcrowding the library or deaccessioning books, but he resisted the term “dead book.” Discussions of a storehouse, perhaps shared with other New England libraries, continued over the next few years.⁷⁰

1898-1899: William Coolidge Lane described access to Gore Hall during this period: “Cards of admission to different departments of the Library are given, on recommendation of an instructor, to all advanced students who need to go directly to the shelves for purposes of investigation in connection with their work.” Radcliffe students might consult books in a small reading room.⁷¹

1898-1899: A new method of checking the stacks was introduced in Gore Hall. Previously, the stacks were checked against a shelf-list twice a year. Now they would be checked each month. A list of books that were out of place was checked against circulation and cataloging records. If a book had not reappeared after several months it was declared missing.⁷²

Late 1890s-early 1900s: The Fogg Art Museum mounted photographs and prints for many departments in the University. Its own collection of photographs had outgrown the cases set aside for it, and the museum could not afford new cases. Photographs accumulated in piles on top of the old cases.⁷³

Early 1900s: Gore Hall was utterly overwhelmed with books. Many books were sent for storage in departmental libraries and other buildings. Discussion of off-site storage continued.⁷⁴

1900: Frank Carney (who worked in the Shelf Department) described the annual cleaning of books in Gore Hall. Janitors took down a section of books and put them in order on a table. They washed the empty shelf with a “nearly dry” sponge and a brush, if necessary, to remove excess dirt. Books were “taken from the table and the top and sides wiped with a dry cloth and knocked together gently to shake out any dust remaining upon them.” To clean the whole library took several months. The job was done by one or more people.75

1900: Due to overcrowding, the Radcliffe Library was moved from Fay House to the Gilman Schoolhouse. The need for a fireproof building with high storage capacity and good ventilation was apparent. The addition—several years later—of two extra rows of shelves to the bookcases did little to help the situation.76

February 1900: Many books in the Harvard collection were discovered to have been mutilated in order to remove their bookplates. Dr. Charles E. Cameron, a Boston physician, stole the plates and subsequently sold them to collectors. Most plates were recovered. Cameron paid all expenses, including the cost of rebinding the books.77

May 1900: The Harvard Treasurer's accounts from 1669 to 1693 were in terrible condition, due in large part to “a long sojourn in John Hancock's carriage house where they were eaten by insects and discolored and rotted by damp.” Harvard commissioned the Emery Record Company of Taunton to mount each page between sheets of white silk.78

1900: Harvard received the Riant collection of early manuscripts and incunabula. Initially these items were stored in locked cases. The value of this collection led the library to consider building a Treasure Room, for secure storage and display of rare and valuable books.79

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1901-1902: Concerns about fire at the Observatory were somewhat alleviated by a donation that funded a brick storage wing for many of its photographs. The library was still housed in a wooden building, however, and the Observatory installed a hydrant and hoses to augment its fire alarms and fire extinguishers. Fire drills were conducted every other month.\textsuperscript{80}

1902-1903: Concerns were raised about the inefficient and insecure storage of rare books in Gore Hall. They were arranged by subject in “small locked closets which have been built at frequent intervals as needed against the ends of the book-rows in the stack.” Each time he wanted to consult a rare book, a reader needed to fetch an attendant to open the necessary closet(s). Closets were sometimes left unlocked.\textsuperscript{81}

1903: The Rules of the Library stated that “no borrower shall write or mark in a book belonging to the Library; and any damage to, or loss of, books, shall be made good to the satisfaction of the Librarian, at a valuation to be determined by him.” Students could not graduate until their fines to the library had been paid.\textsuperscript{82}

February 27, 1904: The Med. Fac. Society, a secretive club that had existed at Harvard since the early 19\textsuperscript{th} century, vandalized the reading room of Gore Hall with brown and white paint. The main targets were statues and chairs. Eggs were broken on the superintendent’s desk.\textsuperscript{83}

1904: The Harvard Library, conscious of its own disastrous history with fire, donated one hundred books to the National Library in Turin following its destruction by fire.\textsuperscript{84}

1904: The Radcliffe Student Library Committee was partially responsible for keeping the Radcliffe Library orderly and quiet. In following years, they often found or replaced overdue and lost books. When reserve books were lost from the Radcliffe Library, the classes for which they were reserved contributed money to replace them.\textsuperscript{85}

1904-1908: The new Radcliffe Library was planned, constructed, and opened. Dean Agnes Irwin convinced Andrew Carnegie to make a gift of $75,000. This amount was

\textsuperscript{81} William Coolidge Lane, “The Library,” Annual Reports of the President and Treasurer of Harvard College 1902-1903 (1904): 216.
\textsuperscript{84} William Coolidge Lane, “The Library,” Reports of the President and Treasurer of Harvard College 1903-1904 (1905): 212.
matched by gifts from alumnæ and friends of Radcliffe. The new library was openstack, at the insistence of the librarian, Caroline Farley.  

1905: While President Eliot continued to push for offsite storage with courier service to Gore Hall, William Coolidge Lane countered by describing the experience of sending a group of “dead” books to Robinson Hall. The result was a high demand on the library messenger to retrieve books for use by readers. Meanwhile, the over-crowding of books in Gore Hall hindered access and damaged books.  

1906-1908: A final—two-story, reinforced concrete—addition was made to the north side of Gore Hall’s east stack. One new feature was the Treasure Room, where valuable books could be kept secure and used under supervision. This room had twenty-three sliding book cases: an early example of compact shelving. Gore Hall’s new Map Room stored maps and atlases on sliding horizontal shelves. Several reading rooms were lit by tungsten lamps. There was still not enough space to house all of the library’s books.  

March 4, 1907: A fire at the residential hall of the Observatory was extinguished before the arrival of the city fire department, thanks in part to experience gained from frequent fire drills.  

1907-1908: William Coolidge Lane noted that the annual cleaning of the Gore Hall’s books now took four men working over three months—“a constantly increasing, but apparently unavoidable, item of expense.” He blamed the Cambridge air, full of coal-smoke, for the dust that accumulated on the books. Lane considered several future preventative measures, including filtering the air being introduced to the library and applying “dust-laying compounds” to paths and streets in Cambridge. The library experimented with a book-cleaning mechanical vacuum, but chose not to purchase one.  

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1908: Caroline Farley, Librarian of Radcliffe, resigned due to poor health. Her successor, Rose Sherman, often included specific statistics about binding costs in her annual reports. She did not specify where the binding was done.  

1910-1911: Gore Hall was too small and not fireproof. Thousands of books were stored in basements around campus. Other books were piled on tables or on the floor of Gore Hall. A committee of architects submitted a plan for a new library building, but there were no funds available to build it.

1911: The libraries of the Harvard Divinity School and the Andover Seminary were united in a new fireproof stack in Andover Hall. The schools separated in 1926, but the libraries remained united as the Andover-Harvard Theological Library. In June 1912, this library extended privileges to officers and students of Radcliffe College.

November 1911: Radcliffe College began to pay an annual fee of $500 ("to defray the expenses incurred") so that its students could continue borrowing books from Gore Hall.

April 14, 1912: Harry Elkins Widener, class of 1907, died aboard the Titanic. He left his collection of rare books to his mother, Eleanor Elkins Widener, with the understanding that she would donate them to Harvard once there was a suitable library in which to store them. She offered Harvard a library as a monument to her son. The building was a compromise between recommendations made by Harvard’s own library committees and the wishes of Eleanor Elkins Widener regarding its appearance.

1912-1916: During the construction of Widener Library, most books remained accessible and were stored in Massachusetts Hall, Randall Hall, the Andover-Harvard Theological Library, and departmental libraries. Some rare books were stored in a safe deposit vault. Widener was built on an area that stretched from the site of Gore Hall to Massachusetts Avenue. A patron with access to the stacks (professors and “advanced students”) had access to the entire collection, not just subject-specific collections.

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91 See Caroline Farley’s and Rose Sherman’s annual reports of this period (in Annual Reports of the President and Treasurer of Radcliffe College).
95 Bentinck-Smith, “Archibald Cary Coolidge and the Harvard Library, II. Facing the Question as a Whole,” 428-442.
96 See Archibald Cary Coolidge’s and A. Lawrence Lowell’s annual reports of this period (in Reports of the President and Treasurer of Harvard College).
1913-1914: After renovations at the Fogg Art Museum, prints were moved from the basement into upstairs storage cases. The Museum, which owned large collections of books, slides, photographs, and prints, was hindered by a lack of space.⁹⁷

January 1914: The Radcliffe Student Government Association took “responsibility for the conduct of the students in the Library,” and meted out punishments for improper behavior.⁹⁸

June 24, 1915: Widener Library was formally dedicated. Books began to be moved in from Randall Hall. Widener had adequate space for Harvard’s books, as well as ample study and classroom space. Load-bearing stacks allowed for the weight of many books. A small reading room was reserved for Radcliffe students, and some advanced Radcliffe students were allowed into the stacks.⁹⁹

1916: With the understanding that photographic reproduction would be important to a modern research library, a photographic laboratory with one wooden camera was established in Widener. The laboratory was intended to be financially self-sustaining, but had to sell its equipment to the library in 1918.¹⁰⁰

1918: George Vasmer Leverett bequeathed to Radcliffe Library more than a thousand books, some very valuable and rare.¹⁰¹

1918-1920: The Radcliffe Library had run out of shelf-space, but could not afford a major renovation. Instead, new shelves in the basement would house periodicals and a fireproof vault would store rare books and doctoral theses.¹⁰²

1918-1920s: World War I and post-war inflation caused Widener to postpone projects, including necessary binding, due to rising costs. Several staff members were fired due to lack of funds.¹⁰³

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¹⁰² See Rose Sherman’s annual reports of this period (in Annual Report of Radcliffe College).
1919: Robert H. Pearman, who was also a photographer at the Massachusetts Historical Society, was hired to recondition the camera and the darkroom in Widener. The laboratory charged for reproductions, and in 1920-1921 the Photostat was used for 184 jobs, taking in $772.73. These numbers rose in the following years. Pearman continued to work on a part-time basis until he was replaced by Walter B. Ballantyne in 1925. The Photographic Department gained business, added staff, and updated its equipment.\footnote{104}

1920s: Widener Library was already overcrowded. It became necessary to add shelving to the lowest two floors and to various sections throughout the stacks.\footnote{105}

1920: Charles Facey developed the Library Bindery as an expansion of a small repair shop in the basement of Widener. The Bindery gained staff and equipment over the following years. It was overseen by the library’s administration.\footnote{106}

1924-1925: The Radcliffe Library was again overcrowded. The problem was addressed by storing books on top of bookcases, installing five double-faced cases for reserved books, and building bookshelves along the walls of one room.\footnote{107}

1925-1926: Rose Sherman, Librarian at Radcliffe, noted the “widespread lack of responsibility” demonstrated by students in the library. Books were cut up, written upon, and taken without being checked out. She noted that these were expensive and frustrating side effects of the open-stack system. The year was also noteworthy for an increase in binding. In addition to the usual binding of periodicals, the library had engaged in “a systematic attempt to strengthen bindings.” Many books with loose bindings were recased in their old covers, a job that was done in the library.\footnote{108}

1926-1927: Rose Sherman noted the “frequent and mysterious disappearance” of books from the Radcliffe Library. New security measures—including a desk at the exit of the reserved books room (the Fiske Room) where patrons were required to show all of their

\footnote{103}{See Archibald Cary Coolidge’s annual reports of this period (in \textit{Reports of the President and Treasurer of Harvard College}). Regarding layoffs, see Archibald Cary Coolidge, “The Library,” \textit{Reports of the President and Treasurer of Harvard College 1919-1920} (1921): 190.}


\footnote{105}{See Archibald Cary Coolidge’s annual reports of this period (in \textit{Reports of the President and Treasurer of Harvard College}).}

\footnote{106}{Mabel F. Barnes, “The Library Bindery,” \textit{Harvard Library Notes} 25 (June 1935), 60-63.}


books—were approved and put into place. Mending and repair work continued. Much of this work was done by Elfreda C. Heath, who remained at Radcliffe until 1945.109

1927-1928: Georgiana Ames, the new Librarian of Radcliffe, noted that fewer books had been lost since security measures were instituted. Students still kept books for too long and frequently whispered in the library, forcing staff to act as disciplinarians. The library remained overcrowded; many items—including maps—were moved to the basement. During the summer, books were cleaned “with a vacuum cleaner.” Ames kept statistics about annual expenditures for binding and recasing; she also noted the number of books mended in the library each year.110

1928: Edward W. Forbes founded the Fogg Art Museum’s Department of Technical Studies (also referred to as the Department of Conservation and Technical Research, later the Straus Center for Conservation and Technical Studies). It quickly became an important voice in the growing field of conservation science. In the 1930s, the department examined and experimented on a variety of materials, including drawings and engravings, to determine best restoration practices. The department produced and studied X-rays of paintings. Another study examined “the effect of oxidation on the cellulose fibre of paper.”111

1929: The Library Bindery moved from Widener to the Boylston Hall Annex (the current site of Wigglesworth Hall), where there was more space for its equipment. This freed up space in Widener for expansion of the Treasure Room, such that one room would primarily be used for exhibitions and another would be used for secure storage. A small repair shop remained in operation in Widener.112

1929-1930: Lists of books missing from the Radcliffe Library were printed in The Radcliffe Daily. Editorials in this newspaper discussed students’ obligations to return books and to keep them in good condition. Overcrowding of the library continued. An

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“unused coal hole” was cleaned and equipped with shelves in order to provide more storage space.113

1929-1930: Widener’s female cleaning staff were dismissed in December 1929 and replaced with male workers. Frank Carney (who worked in the Shelf Department) found that the men lacked discipline and left many parts of Widener uncleaned. There were complaints from patrons about dust and uncollected trash.114

Early 1930s: House libraries opened in seven Harvard dormitories. Many freshmen used the library in the Freshman Union.115

Early 1930s: It was discovered that numerous books had been stolen from the stacks of Widener. In the following years, the thieves were caught and many of the books were recovered. The Library Council and the Faculty of Arts and Sciences agreed that security in Widener should be increased. As a result, a guard was placed at each entrance and a barrier with turnstiles was constructed at the main entrance. The locks to the stacks were changed and the number of keys in circulation was reduced. (Young staff, research assistants, and secretaries were now less likely to receive keys.)116

1930: Plans to build Wigglesworth Hall caused the Bindery to move to 888 Memorial Drive (former site of the Hingham Knitting Company). It was difficult for Widener to administer the department from this distance.117

1930-1931: Recognizing that some books become more valuable with time, staff and patrons recommended books for transfer from the open stacks to the Widener Treasure

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Room. The Treasure Room stored manuscripts, incunabula, rare books, examples of fine printing, books with valuable plates, etc.  

1930-1931: The Radcliffe Library opened a Map Room in Longfellow Hall. Twelve maps were mended before being moved there with the others. More shelves were built in the basement of the library.  

1931: A student advertised a Leica camera in the *Harvard Crimson*. Widener Library’s Photographic Department bought the camera, which was used to begin producing microfilm facsimiles. Production was slow and labor-intensive at first.  

1931-1932: A new building at the Observatory would provide adequate space and a fireproof environment for its immense collection of glass negatives.  

1931-1932: Georgiana Ames began to note the following statistics for binding and repair work at the Radcliffe Library: volumes bound and rebound, outside the Library; volumes repaired, in the Library; pamphlets inserted in binders, in the Library.  

1931-1933: A decrease in the University’s income caused Widener to close in the evening and on Sundays. Many Harvard libraries coped with reduced budgets.  

February 1932: The Radcliffe Student Government Library Committee wrote letters or conducted interviews with students who returned more than 5 books after their due date. The library needed but could not afford additional space. Several years later, Georgiana Ames noted “the tragic unexpansiveness of the present building.”  

1934: The Harvard Bindery became a department independent from the Library. It did business with the Harvard College Library as well as with other departments of the University. When Charles Facey resigned, Robert F. Fiske became superintendent. In the following decades, most libraries at Harvard did business with the Bindery, as did departments and individual scholars. A workshop in Widener continued to do basic

binding repairs. Records indicate Fiske’s interest in materials, equipment, standards, and treatments of bindings (leather preservative, e.g.). The Harvard University Archives holds correspondence indicating that questions regarding environment, mildew, and storage of books were directed to him. Services offered by the Bindery included “repairing, mounting photostats, making cases, folios, labels, etc.” More detailed work was possible for special projects. For example, a 1939 job description for a book from the Widener Treasure Room reads, “reback chocolate calf, AV 209 sides. Remove old mend from A3. Mount between silk. Mount TP on paper.”

March 1935: The Radcliffe Library used its front hall to display a “varied collection of mutilated books” as an effort in user education. The show was called “Radcliffe Native Industries.”

1935: Robert Blake noted the over-crowding of Widener’s Treasure Room and the need for additional funds to rebind and repair its holdings. The Treasure Room collection continued to grow, both by donation and by the transfer of books from the main stacks.

1935: Eleanor S. Peters, librarian of the Museum of Comparative Zoology, having already implemented a system of organizing the library’s pamphlets, hired an assistant to “clean, oil, and repair the bindings” of over 200 rare books in the collection. She also initiated a binding program for the collection’s serials.

1935-1936: The Divinity School Library constructed a cage to hold archival materials related to missionary work.

1935-1936: Georgiana Ames described the Widener privileges available to Radcliffe students. Some undergraduates—this year, 45—were given access while they were working on their theses. Graduate students could use the Widener stacks year-round. Many also used departmental libraries at Harvard. The Radcliffe Library still could not

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afford a new building, and instead underwent renovations: wooden shelves were replaced with steel, and tables were removed to make more room for shelves. The Student Government Library Committee continued its outreach to encourage student responsibility and organized a “Be Kind to Books Day” in April 1936.\footnote{135}

**Late 1930s**: The Radcliffe Library dealt with overcrowding by shifting parts of its collections to Byerly Hall, Agassiz House, and dormitory libraries.\footnote{134}

**Late 1930s**: Widener installed a book drop, allowing patrons to return books when the library was closed.\footnote{135}

**Spring 1937**: The Harvard University Bindery installed a display of its bindings, with samples and photographs, at the Radcliffe Library.\footnote{136}

**1937-1938**: Widener’s Photographic Department acquired a Folmer-Graflex Photorecord camera. This camera produced better microfilm, more quickly, than the Leica purchased in 1931. The Photographic Department also purchased a microfilm reader. It soon became necessary to purchase two additional readers. Patron demand for microfilm reproductions increased in the following years. Beginning in 1938, in collaboration with the Rockefeller Foundation, the Library regularly acquired microfilm reproductions of foreign newspapers.\footnote{137}

**1937-1938**: The Farlow Reference Library purchased steel filing cabinets for its collection of pamphlets and reprints. The cabinets protected the items from dust and eliminated the need to bind each item.\footnote{138}

**1937-1939**: Repairs were made to the Treasure Room, the Reading Room, and other areas of Widener. An air humidification system installed in the Treasure Room stack was intended to improve environmental conditions for the collection. Stacks constructed in the Widener sub-basement helped alleviate over-crowding, but mildew was a possibility in this moist environment.\footnote{139}

\footnote{134} See Georgiana Ames’s annual reports of this period (in *Reports of Officers*).
\footnote{135} Lovett, “The Undergraduate and the Harvard Library, 1877-1937,” 236.
\footnote{139} Keyes D. Metcalf, “University Library,” *The report of the President of Harvard College and reports of the departments for 1937-1938* (1939): 341; Keyes D. Metcalf,
September 1938: A hurricane damaged the joints of the Radcliffe Library’s skylight. The damage went unnoticed until March 1939, when melting water from a heavy snowstorm dripped through the skylight for several hours. Some books were completely soaked. Others were warped either by water or by improper drying techniques.  

1938-1939: The Radcliffe Library surveyed its reserved books and several subject areas in the stacks in order to determine which needed repair or rebinding. As a result, the number of books that received “preservation by rebinding” doubled over the previous year to 2,197. Members of the Student Government Library Committee walked through the Library wearing posters reminding their classmates not to talk or eat. In subsequent years they also organized an exhibit of mutilated books (“propaganda against misuse”) and helped to erase marks made in books. 

1939: The Harvard University Archives was established, with the official purpose of preserving University records.  

1940: Keyes D. Metcalf, Librarian at Harvard College and Director of the Harvard University Libraries, began to promote his plan to save space by creating specialized libraries, including a rare books library, an undergraduate library, and a warehouse for low-use materials. Houghton Library, Lamont Library, and the New England Deposit Library were the realizations of this plan. 

1940: The Widener Photographic Department purchased a Recordak Model D camera to keep up with increasing demand for microfilm. A second Recordak Model D was purchased in 1946. 

1940-1942: In 1940, Arthur A. Houghton Jr. agreed to endow a library for rare books and manuscripts. The donor remained anonymous for a time, but the library—which opened in 1942—was named for him. The building was air-conditioned for stable temperature and humidity, providing a better environment for books than Harvard had yet been able to supply. “Cool lighting” was used in the display cases. Shelving was designed to be free of edges that might damage bindings. The opening of Houghton stimulated the donation of rare books to Harvard. William Bond, librarian of Houghton from 1965 to 1982, described a team of Houghton employees catching and killing mice (which had


141 Ibid., 43-53. 


entered the building during construction) on the night before the library’s grand opening.\textsuperscript{145}

\textbf{1940-1942:} The New England Deposit Library, a cooperative venture of several Boston-area libraries, was formed. Construction of its warehouse on Western Avenue in Allston was completed in 1942. Creating storage space on inexpensive land saved Harvard the expense of expanding its central library in Cambridge, freed up space in Cambridge collections, and allowed Harvard to postpone binding and repair work. Books from NEDL would be available via messenger service. Due to war-time demands for steel, four of the six floors had wooden shelving. The building lacked climate control.\textsuperscript{146}

\textbf{1941-1942:} The Andover-Harvard Theological Library was overcrowded. Some books were withdrawn and sent to the Andover Newton Theological School. Some duplicates and non-theological materials were sent to Widener. In the same period, many newspapers and periodicals were “put in boxes or protective covers.” Books published before 1700 were removed from the stacks. William A. Jackson, from Houghton, advised on which books should be prioritized for protection in case war endangered the Harvard collections.\textsuperscript{147}

\textbf{1941-1942:} The Radcliffe Library installed “modern fluorescent lamps” in its Reserved Book Room. It continued an ongoing campaign of selecting books for storage in NEDL and for deaccessioning.\textsuperscript{148}

\textbf{1942-1945:} Many Harvard libraries—in addition to dormitories and classroom buildings—were appropriated for war-time purposes. For example, the Victory Book Campaign stored donations on the sixth floor of NEDL. The Radcliffe Librarian noticed an improvement in patron behavior and a decrease in book losses, perhaps due to “new


\textsuperscript{147} Willard L. Sperry, “Divinity School,” \textit{The report of the President of Harvard College and reports of the departments for 1941-1942} (1944): 222.

feelings of responsibility.” Harvard libraries were understaffed due to employees’
joining the war effort, causing the shelves to become disorderly. Acquisitions from
Europe were held up by the war. Houghton provided secure storage for some of the
Harvard Botanical Museum’s Glass Flowers. The Fogg Museum’s Department of
Conservation was temporarily depleted when two important employees join the war
effort: Rutherford John Gettens worked on a government project at Los Alamos, New
Mexico, and George L. Stout was a Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives Officer in the
United States Army. 149

1943: An agreement was reached between Harvard and Radcliffe, such that Radcliffe
increased its annual payment to the Harvard University Libraries (to $5,000) and
“qualified” Radcliffe undergraduates were now granted use of Widener, including the
main reading room (graduate students already had borrowing privileges). The Radcliffe
Library would now primarily function as an undergraduate library, while simultaneously
beginning to develop a collection on the “contributions of women to the culture and
history of the United States.” The Radcliffe Library sent numerous books to NEDL over
the subsequent years.150

1945-1949: Widener’s resources—reserve books, stall space, etc.—were overwhelmed
by the growing student population in the wake of WWII. Financial resources were also
stretched, but Harvard’s participation in the Farmington Plan (a cooperative acquisition
program) gave Keyes D. Metcalf hope that Harvard might be able to purchase books
more selectively. The increasing means of photographic reproduction and the
“disintegration” of books printed on wood pulp paper suggested to him that the net
growth of library collections might decrease.151

149 Keyes D. Metcalf, “University Library,” The report of the President of Harvard
College and reports of the departments for 1942-1943 (1944): 260-264; Georgiana Ames
information on Gettens’s and Stout’s pre-war contributions, see Miriam Clavir,
Preserving What Is Valued: Museums, Conservation, and First Nations (Vancouver:
UBC Press, 2002), 22-24. For their war-time activities, see Arthur Pope, “William Hayes
Fogg Art Museum,” The report of the President of Harvard College and reports of the

See also Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, “Records of the Radcliffe College
Library, 1881-1983: A Finding Aid”; available from nrs.harvard.edu/urn-
3:RAD.SCHL:sch01123; Internet; accessed 30 June 2009. During the 1940s, the entry in
Radcliffe College’s annual reports “College—Income [and Expenditure]” often lists a fee
of $5,000 to “Harvard University for use of Widener.” See, for example, “College—
Bulletin 1, no. 2 (1947): 133-154; see also Keyes D. Metcalf’s annual reports of this
period (in The report of the President of Harvard College and reports of the
departments).
1946-1947: Concerns were expressed about the fire hazard presented by paper cartons of dried plant specimens stored in close proximity to library collections at the Arnold Arboretum and the Gray Herbarium.\textsuperscript{152}

1947: “After a number of years of experimentation with a relatively free borrowing system,” the Andover-Harvard Theological Library instituted shorter circulation periods and a fine system for overdue books. This brought its policies into line with the College Library’s.\textsuperscript{153}

1947-1948: A space in Langdell Hall was renovated into a Treasure Room for the Law School Library, providing air-conditioned storage for rare materials from that library.\textsuperscript{154}

1948: About 1,500 pre-Linnaean botanical volumes from the Arnold Arboretum Library were deposited in Houghton Library, where they were to be stored until the Arnold Arboretum was able to provide a better storage environment. The temperature at the Arnold Arboretum Library fluctuated seasonally and damaged leather bindings. The remaining pre-Linnaean materials were treated with leather preservative and in some cases repaired at the Harvard Bindery.\textsuperscript{155}

1949: The Library of the Museum of Comparative Zoology sent more than 900 rare volumes of natural history to Houghton.\textsuperscript{156}

1949: Lamont Library opened, providing open stacks and a collection designed specifically for the undergraduate population. Lamont was equipped with steel book stacks and an air-conditioning system. The Freshman Union and Boylston Hall reading rooms closed, and many of their books were incorporated into Lamont. Lamont had a smoking room, which Keyes D. Metcalf justified since the building was “fireproof” and the air-conditioning system would remove dirt from the air. Radcliffe graduate students and honors candidates now had “full privileges” in Widener, but Radcliffe students were not allowed to use Lamont until 1967.\textsuperscript{157}

1949-1953: Baker Library occasionally curated an exhibit titled “Enemies of Books,” which demonstrated the destructive power of insects and humans.  

1949-1950: Ruth K. Porritt, the new Librarian of Radcliffe, continued to make note of annual preservation statistics: volumes bound or rebound; volumes repaired in the Library; pamphlets inserted in binders in the Library. Until 1959 Ona A. Morse oversaw “the binding and processing of books.”

1950s: Libraries struggled with the growth of their collections in a limited amount of space. Many selected materials for off-site storage at New England Deposit Library.

Summer 1950: A renovation project at the Radcliffe College Library was intended to assuage student frustration at being denied access to Lamont. Lighting, heat, ventilation, and layout were improved.

1951: The Gray Herbarium deposited more than 300 pre-Linnaean books in Houghton Library.

1951: Renovations in Widener included the expansion of storage space in the Winsor Memorial Map Room, the installation of fluorescent lights in many parts of the building, the addition of more radiators in the stacks, and the installation of exhaust fans in several rooms, including the Photographic Department’s dark room. The roof was also repaired.

Spring 1952: Widener Library opened a coffee lounge for faculty and students.

160 See Keyes D. Metcalf’s and Paul Buck’s annual reports of this period (in Report of the President of Harvard College and reports of departments).
1953-1954: A new fireproof building (with steel shelving and humidity and temperature control) was constructed to house portions of the Gray Herbarium, Arnold Arboretum, Ames Orchid, and paleobotanical collections.\(^\text{165}\)

1954: Lazella Schwarten was appointed librarian of the Arnold Arboretum and the Gray Herbarium. In addition to extensive cataloging she oversaw regular treatment of the collections’ leather bindings with preservative.\(^\text{166}\)

1956: Widener and other Harvard libraries (excepting Lamont) were opened to all Radcliffe undergraduates.\(^\text{167}\)

September 1957: Widener opened a Microtext Reading Room to centralize much of the microform collection in one air-conditioned space.\(^\text{168}\)

1957-1958: Widener began to bind together pamphlets on a particular subject and then to classify and shelve them accordingly, as opposed to previous practice of leaving them unbound in boxes, where “many of them disappeared and many others were damaged.”\(^\text{169}\)

1957-1958: The Radcliffe Library was “unbearably crowded, dirty, and noisy” due to continuing growth of the student body.\(^\text{170}\)

April 16, 1958: The Harvard University Bindery was sold because outside companies offered competitive pricing. Paul H. Buck, Director of the University Library and Librarian of Harvard College, wrote: “Repair work will continue to be done in Widener. A new multiple form has been developed that promises to increase the efficiency of operations in the College Library's Binding Records Section.” The Bindery was sold to Samuel H. Donnell, Class of 1937, who renamed it the New England Bookbinding Company.\(^\text{171}\)


Late 1950s: Concerns grew about poor-quality paper and brittle books. Paul H. Buck wrote of the University Library: “Some of its holdings, if they are to be preserved, must be filmed before the paper on which they are printed turns to dust.”

1958-1959: Allen B. Veaner was appointed Specialist in Documentary Reproduction in the University Library. He was responsible for the Microtext Reading Room, the Photographic Library, and coordinating photographic reproduction throughout the University Library.


1959-1960: A Master Microfilm Collection of negatives was established. The collection would be stored under good physical conditions, in the basement of Lamont, and only used to produce positive film use copies.

1959-1960: The Medical School Library installed a Haloid Xerox office copying machine—“an electrostatic device that will produce a copy of a page in less than one minute”—for patron use. The following year, the Medical School Library would purchase a second photocopying machine and Widener would purchase one as well. Many libraries, such as those of the Arnold Arboretum and the Graduate School of Business Administration, began to fill interlibrary loan requests with Xeroxes or microfilm reproductions.

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1960s-1970s: Repair and rebinding projects were ongoing at the Gray Herbarium and Arnold Arboretum libraries.  

1960-1961: Harvard received a grant from the Charles E. Merrill Trust to purchase new photographic equipment and to renovate the photographic laboratory in Widener.

1960-1961: Plans began for a new undergraduate library at Radcliffe. In the meantime, hours were extended until later in the evening to meet student demand.

1962-1963: Widener Library’s Photographic Department produced more than 655,000 negative microfilm exposures and nearly 350,000 full-size copies. A new Xerox Copyflop machine was used to reproduce catalogue cards.

Spring 1963: The Radcliffe Library began to require that patrons present an ID card in order to access the collection.

1963-1964: Paul Buck wrote: “The output of the Library's Photographic Department during 1963-64 again broke previous records by a substantial margin. Card reproduction has already been mentioned; in addition, 1,139,477 negative microfilm exposures, 67,121 rapid copies, 346,144 electroprints, and 74,700 feet of positive microfilm were produced during the year.”

1963-1964: Widener Library introduced full-time security guards to monitor exits and patrol the building. Paul H. Buck wrote: “It would have been rash to defer any longer this contribution to the safety of the collections and those who use them.”

1963-1964: Concern about the condition of the map collection led the Graduate School of Design to inspect the collection, repairing and re-housing (in steel map-cases) when possible.

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1965-1966: A theft highlighted the need for enhanced security at Baker Library. 

1965-1966: The Gray Herbarium Library would no longer circulate books that were over one hundred years old.

September 1966: Hilles Library opened to enthusiasm from Radcliffe students. Harvard men were so eager to use the new library that the Radcliffe Government Association circulated a petition to limit their access to Hilles. Radcliffe’s undergraduate collection was moved into this building, while the Radcliffe Women's Archives—now the Schlesinger Library—and the Radcliffe Institute were moved into the old Radcliffe Library building.

1966: The Collection Maintenance Section was established within the Catalogue Department of Widener.

1966: Catastrophic floods left Biblioteca Berenson at Villa I Tatti the only functioning library in Florence. (The Villa is located on a hill.) Fellows and staff members aided the relief efforts and salvage work. I Tatti facilities were used to clean, dry, and store negative plates rescued from the Gabinetto Fotografico of the Uffizi.

1966-1967: Plans were made to clean, organize, and microfilm materials from the Theodore Roosevelt Collection, including “some 2,000 combustible nitrate negatives that are now in custody of the Cambridge Fire Department.”


1967: Lamont Library began to admit Radcliffe students.

1967-1968: Minor renovations of Widener’s windows, stacks, and doorways were intended to reduce the danger of a fire spreading due to drafts.\(^{194}\)

20 August 1969: A thief failed to steal the Gutenberg Bible from Widener. In a year of student protests across America (during which some libraries were vandalized), Harvard was particularly concerned for the safety of its collections. Security was heightened at Widener and Houghton.\(^{195}\)

14 October 1970: The detonation of a bomb at the Center for International Affairs (probably planted by affiliates of the radical Weatherman organization) did little damage, but “the result has been a reluctant decision to require identification cards for admission to that Library.”\(^{196}\)

1971: Standard housings for records in the Harvard University Archives were acid-free Permalife folders and Hollinger boxes.\(^{197}\)

1971-1972: The decision was made to microfilm hundreds of volumes of Russian belles-lettres. There were several major benefits to this project: preservation of texts on brittle paper, increased access, and income from the sale of duplicates.\(^{198}\)

1971-1972: The Fine Arts Library received outside funds to reformat negatives from the Arthur Kingsley Porter collection of photographs of medieval art and architecture. Many of the buildings documented in the collection were destroyed or damaged in the years after 1900. Douglas W. Bryant, Director of the University Library and University Librarian, wrote of the negatives: “Many of these, it was discovered, were on nitrocellulose-base film, which deteriorates rapidly and is a serious fire hazard.”\(^{199}\)

\(^{193}\) Gudrais, “A World of Books All Their Own.”
\(^{199}\) Ibid., 429.
1971-1972: An electronic Checkpoint device used to protect the Core Collection was removed from Baker Library after three years. Instead, there would be just one open exit staffed by a security inspector.\(^{200}\)

1972-1973: The Arnold Arboretum and the Farlow Library and Herbarium received National Science Foundation funding that led to extensive rebinding, repairing, and re-housing. Storage conditions were improved. Hundreds of leather bindings were treated with preservative and oil.\(^{201}\)

1973-1974: Doris Freitag, who had been overseeing binding and book repairs in the Andover-Harvard Theological Library, was now part-time conservation consultant to the University Library. She also gave workshops on book conservation. The Emergency Procedures Subcommittee of the standing University Library Committee on Library Collections and Services was evaluating emergency procedures and preparing recommendations. Doris Freitag chaired this committee, which published a booklet, *Emergency Guidelines for Harvard Libraries*.\(^{202}\)

1973-1975: The theft of books and plates from the Gray Herbarium, Arnold, and Farlow Libraries led to the installation of a new alarm system.\(^{203}\)

1974: Widener’s Collection Maintenance Section was transferred from the Catalogue Department to the Collection Development Department. Its name was changed to the Preservation Section.\(^{204}\)

1975-1976: A locked cage was introduced at Andover-Harvard Theological Library for storage of pre-1800 imprints.\(^{205}\)

1976-1977: The Preservation Committee of the University Library Council presented the results of a survey. Its major recommendation was for a Harvard Library collection conservation center. Douglas W. Bryant and Louis E. Martin—Director of the University Library and Librarian of Harvard College, respectively—wrote: “The center, if it can be

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\(^{200}\) Ibid., 436.


\(^{204}\) Williams, “The Book-Preservation Problem as Seen at Harvard,” 442.

financed, would not take over the work that is done in libraries throughout the system, but would provide assistance in emergencies arising from floods and fires, assist in training of staff, purchase materials in bulk, and offer services requiring special skills or expensive equipment."206

1976-1977: Doris Freitag continued to consult on conservation and emergency preparedness. She also obtained evaluations of library bindings done by different commercial binderies.207

1977-1978: Harvard withdrew from the Research Libraries Group. Douglas W. Bryant and Louis E. Martin noted Harvard’s ongoing commitment to preserve books printed on brittle paper. In the following decade numerous subject-specific collections would be microfilmed, primarily funded by grants.208

1978: The Harvard University Library began to receive annual Strengthening Research Library Resources Program (Title II-C) grants from the U.S. Department of Education to microfilm fragile and rare materials from its collections. Over the next 11 years, these grants would fund the filming of approximately 16 million pages from Harvard’s special collections. Ann Swartzell, Preservation Librarian, coordinated these projects, with consultation from Edwin E. Williams.209

1978: The University Library Preservation Committee produced a slide-show about care and handling, "Keeping Harvard's Books." It was shown frequently at Harvard and in the following years it was borrowed by others, including libraries in Australia and Japan.210

April 1978: Doris Freitag oversaw the installation of the Vacudyne Altair Document Fumigator, located in Widener.211

207 Ibid.
1978-1979: The University Archives had been surveying the 250,000 photographs in its collection. Many were cleaned and re-housed.212

1978-1979: Several books damaged by a leak at the Arnold Arboretum Library in Jamaica Plain were treated at the Preservation Office in Cambridge. They were fumigated to retard mold. Several were rebound.213

January 1979: The Library Committee of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences approved a recommendation that books printed prior to 1800 no longer be permitted to circulate from the Widener building.214

1979-1980: Reorganization of the Museum of Comparative Zoology Library revealed the theft of many rare books.215

1980s: Congestion in Widener demonstrated the need for a new library or storage site. Some at Harvard hoped for a new library near Harvard Yard, to be connected to Widener by a bridge or an underground walkway. Oscar Handlin, Director of the University Library, advocated for off-site storage that would provide better conditions than the New England Deposit Library.216

1980s: Oiling of bindings continued to be regular practice at Arnold Arboretum and other botanical collections. Items were also frequently re-housed in acid-free boxes. The Farlow Library regularly sent books to be repaired by outside binders and continued an extensive microfilming project.217

1980-1981: Two endowed preservation funds allowed the Graduate School of Design Library to treat damaged materials and begin conversion to microfilm.218

1981: Edwin E. Williams described the collections care program at Harvard: “For work requiring particular skills and work on very valuable books and manuscripts, we can turn

to specialized craftsmen outside the library. For simpler tasks, it seems more reasonable to expect each major library unit to provide its own facilities; if satisfactory mending can be done on the premises, it seems wasteful to send books out. About twenty persons throughout the Harvard Library are regularly engaged in repair work; for at least ten of them, it is a full-time occupation.”

**1981-1983:** Villa I Tatti, in Florence, suffered a series of rare book thefts, resulting in increased security measures.

**1982:** A revised edition of *Emergency Guidelines for Harvard Libraries* was published.

**1983-1984:** The Farlow Herbarium Library suffered several major leaks from its roof and skylight. The lack of climate control also created problematic conditions for the collection. These problems were addressed in subsequent years.

**1984-1985:** Construction began on the Harvard Depository in Southborough. Several libraries at Harvard and MIT planned to use its facilities. The Depository would provide high-density storage for low-use materials. Environmental conditions would be designed for the preservation of holdings instead of the comfort of patrons.

**1985-1986:** The University Library Council endorsed a resolution on the preservation of materials produced by or for the Library. Books should be printed on acid-free paper. When possible, binding specifications should be discussed with Harvard conservators. Microform publications should be inspected for completeness and packaged for longevity; publishers should store the microform master copy according to preservation standards.

**1986:** Several libraries (Baker Library, the Law School Library) began to move portions of their collections to the Harvard Depository. The process of preparing items for off-site storage often included updated cataloging and item-level repair work.

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1987: A brochure outlining best preservation practices for library exhibitions, *Guidelines for Exhibitions*, was published by the Harvard University Library.\(^{226}\)

1987: Funding from Mr. and Mrs. Edwin A. Malloy made it possible for Harvard to create an endowed position for a preservation librarian. Before the first holder of this position was appointed, Lofton Wilson acted as a preservation fellow in the Harvard University Library.\(^{227}\) She previously directed the Harvard/Radcliffe Manuscript Survey and Guide Project, which “created machine-readable bibliographic records for five thousand manuscript collections in more than fifty repositories at Harvard and Radcliffe.”\(^{228}\)

**Fall 1989:** Carolyn Morrow was appointed Malloy-Rabinowitz Preservation Librarian, “the first named endowment for a senior preservation librarian in the country.” Harvard soon received the first of several NEH grants to microfilm specific collections. Morrow oversaw the development of a comprehensive preservation program designed to maintain circulating and special collections, and to target materials in need of reformatting.\(^{229}\)

1989: Harvard began to participate in the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) program to microfilm brittle books and serials. Harvard completed seven grants between 1989 and 2006, microfilming over 105,000 volumes.\(^{230}\)

1990: Roger Stoddard, Curator of Rare Books, initiated the “Be Kind to Books” program at Houghton. It would focus on staff education in handling, repairing, and photocopying of library books.\(^{231}\)

**January 24, 1990:** The Collection Preservation Priorities Task Group, composed of librarians from different parts of the Harvard system, held its first meeting in the

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August 1990: The Malloy-Rabinowitz Preservation Librarian in the University Library became a joint appointment with the College Library.

September 1990: A preliminary report by Carolyn Morrow led to the creation of the Preservation Department in Widener Library. The goals of this department were “to consolidate preservation decision-making and treatment and address severe workflow and backlog problems.”

November 1990: The Harvard College Library Preservation Department formally opened, with a staff of thirty-four people who had previously worked in other departments of Widener.

1990-1991: An exhibition, “Slow Fires” in Harvard’s Libraries, was displayed in several Harvard libraries. Organized by Carolyn Morrow and Elaine Benfatto, its content was adapted into an appendix to Preserving Harvard’s Retrospective Collections.

1990-1991: A Harvard task group assessed the viability of mass deacidification procedures. Harvard subsequently signed a contract with Akzo Chemicals to deacidify an initial 5,000 maps and 4,000 books. Akzo used the diethyl zinc (DEZ) gaseous deacidification process.

1990-1991: Stephen L. Womack, while an employee in the Widener stacks, mutilated hundreds of books on the library shelves. He was arrested in 1994 and convicted in 1996.

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receiving the maximum sentence of seven to ten years. Sidney Verba, Director of the University Library, referred to him as “a library terrorist.”


1992: Harvard opened a Conservation Laboratory in the Massachusetts State Archives at Columbia Point. This laboratory was designed specifically for treating materials from Harvard’s special collections. The Columbia Point location was temporary, and the laboratory soon moved to Cambridge. A grant from Edwin A. Malloy supported the first years of the Conservation Laboratory.

1992: The Woodberry Poetry Room regularly treated and remastered recordings on fragile media (glass-coated disks, acetate tapes) in its audio laboratory.

1992-1993: The HUL Preservation Office developed a methodology to conduct condition surveys on research collections.

December 1993: In addition to book checkers situated at library exits, HCL installed electronic book tags and security gates. In 1995, a full-time security officer was hired to keep track of unusual patterns in the libraries of Harvard College. This meant that Harvard’s many libraries were now more likely to share information about suspicious behaviors or discoveries.

1992-1994: Akzo Chemicals continued to oversee deacidification of 10,000 books and 16,000 maps from Harvard. The closing of Akzo’s deacidification facility in 1994 led the HUL Preservation Office to investigate other processes (Battelle and BookKeeper).


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243 Hightower, “Destroyer of Books Gets Stiff Sentence.”

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July 1994: Carolyn Morrow resigned her position as Malloy-Rabinowitz Preservation Librarian.  

1994-1995: The HUL Preservation Center was consolidated so that administrative and conservation staff would work from a single facility at 59 Plympton Street.

1994-1996: The Widener Judaica Division digitized thousands of Israeli posters for the joint purposes of access and preservation. Microfilm had been considered inadequate for the project, because many of the posters were large and colorful. An image database provided the solution. The original posters could be stored in improved conditions at the Harvard Depository. David Moore advised on this project.

1994-1996: Jose Torres-Carbonnel stole rare books and razored plates from books in Widener and the Fine Arts Library. He had access to the libraries because he was married to a Harvard graduate student. Arrested in June 25, 1996, he confessed and was indicted. Most materials were recovered. Conservation and re-cataloging of the mutilated materials took four years—which was longer than Torres-Carbonnel’s prison sentence.

1995: The National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) provided a grant to preserve and provide access to daguerreotypes from Harvard/Radcliffe collections. Building on a condition survey from the previous year, conservators treated and re-housed many daguerreotypes. More daguerreotypes were photographed in preparation for reformating.

April 1995: Jan Merrill-Oldham was appointed Malloy-Rabinowitz Preservation Librarian. In the following years, the HCL Preservation & Imaging Department and the HUL Preservation Center expanded library preservation services at Harvard.

January 1996: Following a flood, the HUL Preservation Center moved from 59 Plympton Street to the eighth floor of Holyoke Center. Its staff members provided

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247 Ibid.
conservation services for rare books, manuscripts, photographs, and other special collections. 252

**July 1996**: An “early-intervention” program was added to the HCL conservation plan. A workstation was installed in Widener for the performance of minor repairs on items that were only slightly damaged. Circulation would hasten damage, and performing minor repairs early would save the time needed for major repairs in the future. 253

**1997**: HCL Photographic Services was renamed Imaging Services to reflect its expansion into digital reformatting. 254

**1997**: A book that was on loan from the Harvard library at the time of the 1764 fire was re-purchased for Harvard. It was the third volume of *The Complete History of England with the Lives of All the Kings and Queens Thereof*. 255

**March 1997**: A Preservation Center website launched. By providing information about guidelines and services, it would be a key tool for librarians and curators at Harvard. 256

**1997-1998**: A new, expanded Conservation Laboratory opened in Widener. HCL Conservation Services treated the College Library’s research collections—by repairing books and creating protective enclosures, for example. The organization of the new facility and the hiring of talented technicians led to an increase in productivity over the next years. 257

**1997-1998**: A workshop about the handling of wet books was presented to staff from the HCL Preservation Services and the HUL Preservation Center. 258

**1998-1999**: The HUL Preservation Center established the Library Collections Emergency Team, a group of preservation librarians and conservators that staffed a 24-hour hotline in order to respond quickly to emergencies in the library collections. In the following years, the team expanded and came to include staff from both the HUL Preservation Center and HCL Preservation Services. 259

254 Ibid., 1.
1999-2004: Major renovations were undertaken in Widener Library, resulting in the introduction of two new reading rooms, the installation of a new HVAC system, and major improvements to the building’s fire suppression and security systems.  

1999-2000: Due to ongoing renovations at Widener, numerous items needed to be moved. Many fragile materials—pamphlets, for example—were transferred to phase boxes. Conservation staff frequently made enclosures for special materials being transferred to the Harvard Depository.

1999-2000: The digital imaging studio in Widener DN-90 developed in quality with the acquisition of new equipment and the configuration of four digital image capture workstations. A variety of materials—reports, daguerreotypes, the Harvard Map Collection’s Mercator globes—were scanned or photographed. Preservation microfilming, primarily of brittle materials, remained a major activity of the Preservation & Imaging Department.

1999-2006: The University awarded Library Digital Initiative grants to libraries throughout Harvard for projects having to do with digital collections. The projects—50 in all—including the creation of metadata and the digitization of analog collections. In addition to making many of Harvard’s unique resources available online, this innovative project laid the groundwork for organizing and preserving digital materials at Harvard. It also educated staff from throughout the Harvard libraries about the technologies and issues involved in digital curation.

March 20, 2000: The HUL Preservation Center was named for Paul M. Weissman (Class of 1952) and Harriet Weissman. The Center continued to treat rare materials from Harvard’s special collections. It also hosted training programs for the Harvard library community. The staff’s projects included stabilizing illuminations in a 15th-century Book of Hours, lining fragments of deteriorating posters with strong Japanese paper, and manufacturing supports and housings for artifacts in a variety of media. Conservators also undertook condition surveys of several Harvard collections.

2002: Binding & Shelf Preparation staff moved into renovated space on D-Level of Widener, allowing Conservation Services to become a more integrated unit. A new

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laboratory allowed the Microfilming Group to film thousands of volumes from Harvard libraries. When a patron requested a microfilm reproduction, the procedure was to produce a master negative and a duplicate negative in addition to positive copies.265

October 2002: The Library Collections Emergency Team organized a full-day disaster simulation attended by 35 staff members. Training sessions on care and handling were also organized for library staff.266

2002-2003: The Weissman Preservation Center surveyed the preservation needs of Harvard's 7+ million photographs. This groundbreaking survey, funded by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, continues to be emulated by other major institutions.

2003-2004: The Woodberry Poetry Room Collection Library Digital Initiative developed a workflow and technical specifications for audio preservation.267

June 2004: The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation provided a major grant to support the preservation of photographs at Harvard.268

2004-2005: The Weissman Preservation Center improved its management of conservation records. Its database stored information about surveys and treatments, saving time and centralizing record-keeping. The Center also assisted specific libraries to develop emergency response plans and established a program to help librarians monitor the temperature and relative humidity of their facilities.269

2004-2005: The “NEDL Push” was a project to transfer materials from the New England Deposit Library (NEDL) to better conditions in the Harvard Depository (HD). In the HCL Collections Conservation Laboratory, tens of thousands of deteriorating sheets of newspaper were microfilmed, mended, and re-housed before transfer to HD. The Lab was involved in several other microfilming and digitizing projects, as well.270

2004-2005: As part of a departmental reorganization, the HCL Microfilming Laboratory was renamed Scanning and Microfilming Services. This title better reflected its reproduction of texts both on microfilm and in digital formats.271

268 Ibid., 1.

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October 2005: Brenda Bernier began to work at the Weissman Center as senior photograph conservator. In 2007, this position was endowed and the title was changed to Paul M. and Harriet L. Weissman Senior Photograph Conservator. A grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation made it possible to focus more closely on photograph preservation in the following years.

2005-2006: Conservation Services advised and assisted several Harvard libraries on commercial binding preparation. In addition to its numerous other projects, Conservation Services provided support for the Smart Barcoding Project, which would help HCL keep track of inventory.272

2005-2006: Four broad HCL collections were identified for digitization by Imaging Services: Widener Library Pamphlets, Historic Photographs of Asia, Music Scores, and Medieval Manuscripts. Until now, microfilming was a major part of the preservation program for HCL’s brittle books. Digitization was now recognized as an alternative to microfilming; books that were copyright-protected or incompatible with the digitization workstations would still be microfilmed. Original paper copies were retained in the Harvard Depository.273

2006: Members of the Library Collections Emergency Team (LCET) presented a program about hurricane preparedness for libraries, in part due to alarms raised by Hurricane Katrina in August 2005. A new Wei T’o book freezer was installed on the D-Level of Widener, and repairs were done to the freezer in the Binding and Shelf Preparation office at 625 Massachusetts Avenue.274

May 5, 2006: The Weissman Preservation Center moved to a new facility at 90 Mount Auburn Street. The new laboratory included equipment that would allow conservation staff to provide better treatments to the Harvard collections.275

2006: The Weissman Preservation Center collaborated with the HUL Office for Information Systems to develop specifications for the preservation of digital content. The Weissman Preservation Center continued to provide training programs to the Harvard library community.276

March 2008: A broken drainpipe in Pusey Library poured 500 gallons of water into the Harvard Theater Collection. HCL Operations and the Library Collections Emergency

Team (LCET) responded within 20 minutes, worked through the night, and prevented untold damage to irreplaceable collections.  

**2009:** A team from the Weissman Center began surveying audiovisual holdings in the Harvard University Archives. The survey aimed to identify assets and to assess their condition. This project included the development of a database that would help determine preservation and reformatting priorities, as well as a taxonomy that describes the composition and condition of a variety of audiovisual materials.

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