



The Library of the Psychological Laboratories

Citation

Boring, Edwin G. 1947. The Library of the Psychological Laboratories. Harvard Library Bulletin 1 (3), Autumn 1947: 394-

Permanent link

<http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:42673628>

Terms of Use

This article was downloaded from Harvard University's DASH repository, and is made available under the terms and conditions applicable to Other Posted Material, as set forth at <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:dash.current.terms-of-use#LAA>

Share Your Story

The Harvard community has made this article openly available. Please share how this access benefits you. [Submit a story](#).

[Accessibility](#)

The Library of the Psychological Laboratories

WHEN Emerson Hall was built in 1905 for the uses of the Division of Philosophy, Mr Reginald C. Robbins, '92, founded the Robbins Library of Philosophy, adding about 1800 volumes to the 750 contained in the old Philosophy Library and Psychological Laboratory previously housed in Dane Hall. The Robbins Library has continued up to the present as a special library of the Harvard College Library, at first with considerable growth, and then, as its shelves became packed, with the maintenance of a working library from which the more obsolete books were culled every few years. As of December 1946 it contained 8200 volumes.

Now, with the fission of psychology between the Department of Psychology and the Department of Social Relations, the Robbins Library has been split three ways. There remains — quite properly — the Robbins Library of Philosophy and the philosophical books and serials in it. The books and serials in social and clinical psychology have been transferred to the Library of Social Relations across the hall, whereas the books and serials in general, experimental, and physiological psychology have been taken to the new Library of the Psychological Laboratories in the reconditioned basement of Memorial Hall. The latter transfer was completed by 2 June 1947.

The Psychology Library has been built into the center of the new Psychological Laboratories. The reading room is 19 by 28 feet, with two al-

coves, each 4 by 8 feet, extending into the massive foundations of the old Memorial Hall. This room and its alcoves are surrounded by recessed shelves. All woodwork is finished in light rosy oak. There are oyster and rose tiles on the floor, and, since there are no windows, the illumination is fluorescent lighting. A post in the center, necessary for the support of Memorial Hall above, is surrounded by a circular table. Other tables and chairs have been installed, and with the addition of a leather divan and some comfortable arm chairs there will be seats for about twenty-four readers.

Beyond the reading room is a work room, 8 by 28 feet, where readers may spread out their work on tables, type from books, or use a microfilm projector.

The librarian, Mrs Barbara B. Porter, is located in an ante-room, 17 feet square. Readers enter by this room, past a curved counter with a glass brick wall which serves to isolate the librarian's office space. For the present the Library will be open during the working hours of the Laboratories — from 9 to 1 and 2 to 5.

The Psychology Library is a working library for the faculty, scientists, and graduate students undertaking research in the Psychological Laboratories. These laboratories include the Laboratory of General Psychology, the Laboratory of Physiological Psychology, and the Psycho-Acoustic Laboratory.

At present the Psychology Library

contains fifty files of serials, twenty that are closed series, and thirty that are still active and growing. Altogether these files total about 1100 volumes. A few more serials are being started and back numbers of them are being sought. The Library has also about 1100 books. Of the 1700 books classified as psychology in the old Robbins Library, Psychology proper took almost exactly half, leaving the other half for the Library of Social Relations. The Psychology Library has, in addition, had accretions from the old Tutorial Library (incorporated as a whole) and from periodicals assembled by the Psycho-Acoustic Laboratory during the war.¹

The cases are six shelves high. At present the two bottom shelves are covered with removable panels and only the upper four shelves are used. There is thus room for fifty per cent growth. Serials will account for most of the growth, for with the books of a working library it is a satisfactory policy to let obsolescence balance accessions. It seems probable that obsolescence and accessions may fall between five and ten per cent per annum, a fairly low figure. It has been said that mathematics tends to run about six per cent, chemistry about thirteen per cent.

¹ An inventory of the Library as of 30 June 1947 shows the following composition for its collection: books from Robbins Library 850, periodicals from Robbins Library 1067, books from Psychology Tutorial Library 256, periodicals from Psycho-Acoustic Laboratory 41, books purchased since 2 June 1947 9; totals 1115 books, 1108 periodicals. In July the book total was increased by 118 books from the Psycho-Acoustic Laboratory.

Since the Psychology Library is a working library, nearly all the volumes, both serials and books, are duplicates of volumes in Widener. Some of the more technical volumes, however, are duplicated only in special libraries — for the most part in the Departments of Biology or Physics. As time goes on it will be necessary also to duplicate some of the books in the Library of Social Relations.

The division of the books between Psychology and Social Relations was not difficult although not conventional. The Psychology Library, as residuary legatee, took all the general texts, experimental and physiological psychology, psychological mathematics, and statistics. Social psychology and clinical psychology went to Social Relations. Personality went to Social Relations except when the biological basis of personality was stressed. Psychological tests, other than psychophysical measurement, were counted as allied to clinical psychology. Heredity in relation to genes and chromosomes went one way; heredity in relation to race improvement and eugenics went the other. Biological evolution went one way, social evolution the other. Darwin stayed with biology. Abnormal psychology when related to the functioning of the nervous system went one way; abnormal psychology when concerned with the adjustment of the personality to life went the other. Psychic research, appropriately, split at random. The tougher parts migrated to Memorial Hall, the softer pieces stayed in Emerson.

EDWIN G. BORING

List of Contributors

†MAXWELL E. PERKINS, 1884-1947, late Vice-President and Director of Charles Scribner's Sons

THOMAS LITTLE, School of Library Service, Columbia University

KEYES D. METCALF, Professor of Bibliography, Director of the Harvard University Library, and Librarian of Harvard College

WILLIAM A. JACKSON, Professor of Bibliography and Assistant Librarian of the Harvard College Library in charge of the Houghton Library

C. LESLIE CRAIG, Minister of Cottenham Park Methodist Church, London, England

ARTHUR H. COLE, Professor of Business Economics and Librarian of the Baker Library, Harvard University

HAMILTON VAUGHAN BAIL, Deputy Treasurer of the Franklin Institute, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

FRANCIS P. MAGOUN, JR, Professor of Comparative Philology, Harvard University

OTTO KINKELDEY, Librarian and Professor of Musicology, Emeritus, Cornell University; Horatio Appleton Lamb Visiting Lecturer on Music, Harvard University

WILLIAM VAN LENNEP, Curator of the Theatre Collection in the Harvard College Library

WILLIAM H. BOND, Assistant to the Librarian of the Houghton Library, Harvard University

NATALIE N. NICHOLSON, Librarian of the Graduate School of Engineering, Harvard University

RUPERT B. LILLIE, Theodore B. Pitman Studio, Cambridge, Massachusetts

EDWIN G. BORING, Professor of Psychology, Chairman of the Department of Psychology, and Director of the Psychological Laboratory, Harvard University

WILLIAM BERRIEN, Professor of Romance Languages and Literatures, Harvard University

AGNES MORGAN, Keeper of Drawings in the William Hayes Fogg Museum of Art, Harvard University