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The Collections of the Harvard University Archives

THE preceding number of the LIBRARY BULLETIN contained a description of the functions and goals of the Harvard University Archives. There remains to tell what has been accomplished, to describe, briefly, the contents of what is apparently the largest existing body of archival material relating to an educational institution.

In the seventeenth century, the President, the Secretary of the Board of Overseers, and the Treasurer each kept only those parts of the college records which interested him. But, fortunately, they copied into their own minute books those portions of the records of the other departments which concerned them, so that, in spite of the destruction of the second volume of records in the fire of 1764, most of the lost minutes may be recovered from copies in the other volumes of the series. By good chance, President Holyoke had the most important college records in his office in Wadsworth House on the fatal night of the fire. Eighty years later President Sparks gathered up all the loose college papers which he could find, bound them, and had them placed in the College Library. To this collection President Quincy later added the minute books which had been sitting on a shelf in Wadsworth House. Since Sibley's day (1856-1877) the College Librarians have taken a deep interest in this archive, have studied it, and have added to it when occasion afforded. A dozen years ago Clarence E. Walton began the reorganization of the Archives according to the principles worked out by European archivists, and today the department has completed the transition from an antiquarian collection to a daily functioning organism of the University.

It is a little hard to describe the size of the Harvard Archives. A library is chiefly composed of books and is not too deeply concerned with the count of its pamphlets and portfolios. The contents of an archive, on the contrary, consist of a varied assortment of boxes, bundles, files, and volumes, largely folio. To keep track of growth, rather than to have a means of comparing holdings with those of other archives, the staff of the Archives keeps an item count. For such purposes an item may be a bundle, box, volume, file, or a pamphlet important

enough to have an individual place on the inventory. However, the average size of the items approximates that of a book because the number of separately catalogued pamphlets offsets the number of large boxes. There is in the Harvard collection a total of 51,546 items, which occupy 8,793 feet of shelf space.

It is not the mere size of the Archives which is impressive, however, but the scope. The Archives can properly be said to begin with a meeting of the Governors of Harvard College, which was the first governing body, on 27 December 1643. The Corporation records do not begin until 1654, thanks to the then-common habit of keeping only such minutes as the scribe thought might be of use later, but from that date to this they sweep in majesty through forty-seven folio volumes. With them are the volumes and boxes of the correspondence of the Presidents and of the Secretaries, and the minutes and correspondence of the committees appointed by the Corporation, the whole amounting to 1,696 volumes and boxes.

The minutes of the Overseers begin with the first meeting under the Charter of 1650 and come down to the present in a much more modest series. More interesting than the minutes are the reports of Visiting Committees, which give a running criticism of Harvard and an accurate description of the changing gods of education. The whole comprises 455 volumes.

As long as the Corporation was composed chiefly of the President and the Tutors, its work was largely concerned with the immediate government of the College, but when the Tutors were dropped from the Corporation, it became necessary to have some body of authority close to the students and meeting regularly in Cambridge. Consequently, in 1725 the President and Tutors began to meet as the Immediate Government, and into their minutes went the kind of record which for some years the Presidents had been keeping in the form of administrative diaries. A century later the Immediate Government became the Faculty. For over a century these records were largely concerned with the activities of the students. With the growing complexities of the University there came the Deans and the Standing Committees, such as those relating to Admissions and Scholarships, whose records have greatly expanded during the past generation as the result of the keeping of more data relating to individual students. The spread of the papers relating to any one student through as many as two dozen different committee and office files has presented a problem,

so the Archives Department has embarked on a program of consolidating sixteen major docket files. Today the archives of the Immediate Government, which is used as a collective term to describe the administrative offices, comprise 4,052 items, mostly boxes. Being concerned largely with human conduct, the Immediate Government minutes of the eighteenth century afford an unique source for the social historian. Here, for example are unexpectedly early references to billiard tables. When the passage of another century opens the records of the Dean's Office to the historian, they will be found to be an invaluable source for biographers as well as historians.

The financial records of the University, like the administrative minutes, begin with the year 1643. They cover many of the minute and most of the important financial transactions of these three centuries. Among these minutiae are some of the sheets which the Butler hung in the buttery and on which he indicated by crosses and checks the cues of beer and other 'sizings,' or extra orders, charged up against each student. What the different marks meant, we have no way of knowing, but the totals are often suggestive. The series of Stewards' ledgers begins with a volume opened in 1650. From this series, and the others which split off from it, one can find the exact cost of most Harvard educations and a record of who paid the bills and, during the first two centuries, with what commodities they were paid. On these books stand the shilling fines for broken windows and the records of appetites as exhibited by charges for commons and sizings. Here, too, are some menus for early Commencement dinners, showing many curious things, such as the use of potatoes before the arrival of the Irish immigration of 1715.

The independent journal series of the Treasurer's Office begins with the volume opened by Treasurer Richards in 1669. More important than the great journal and ledger series are the attached dockets, including whole subseries such as the papers of Treasurer John Hancock. In all, the papers of the business offices now in the University Archives amount to 3,551 items, for the most part folio volumes and boxes. Those portions which are open to use for purposes of research afford material for historians of many fields.

Today a great part of the administrative work of the University is carried on, not by the Corporation, Overseers, Faculty, and financial offices, but by the graduate schools, divisions, departments, museums, laboratories, and like subdivisions. The records of these bodies, begin-

ning with Adams House, the Administrative Board for the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching, and the Alumni Association, and running through the War Service Information Bureau, the Harvard-Yenching Institute, and the Zoology Department, likewise fall within the jurisdiction of the University Archives, but to a large extent these records are still 'active' and therefore retained in the offices which have accumulated them. This portion in the Archives comprises 5,319 items, largely in boxes of correspondence each of which contains half a cubic foot of material.

Taken as a whole, these strictly archival sections of the Harvard University Archives contain a total of 17,844 items, and occupy a little over a mile of shelf space. This represents an increase of 75 per cent in six years, an increase far in excess of normal growth because of the acceleration of the rate of transfer to the Archives arising from war conditions.

Beside this strictly archival material stands a collection of 33,702 items, largely books, which relate to Harvard in one way or another and for the most part are open to the public. These begin with the serial publications of the University, the oldest of them being the catalogue of graduates which began in 1674. Most of these official publications stem from the annual catalogue, which began in 1803 as a broadside list of undergraduates. Six years later the editors incautiously added the names of the President and Faculty to the catalogue, and from that it has grown to its present thousand-page format. In all there are 2,027 volumes of these official publications.

Closely related to these are the manuscripts of lectures delivered on foundations, papers for which prizes have been awarded, and theses submitted in fulfilment of requirements of honors programs or advanced degrees. At the time of the establishment of the Dudleian Lectures, those in charge of the payment of the fee apparently decided that it would be a wise precaution for them to obtain a fair copy of the lecture in the speaker's hand as a receipt; at any rate, the series begins with the Dudleian Lecture of 1765, the first lecture on Harvard's first periodical lecture foundation, and continues to the present day.

One of the important collections for the history of American literature is that of prize papers. Beginning with the establishment of the Bowdoin Prize in 1808, the students have each year submitted essays in competition for various honors and stipends. Whether on subjects chosen by the students or assigned by the Faculty, these essays present

a remarkable picture of the state of human knowledge and public opinion. As it happens, many of the literary lights of the nineteenth century were Harvard men, and these fledgling efforts have real importance in the history of literature.

The file of doctoral dissertations begins in the late eighteenth century with the papers offered for the degree in medicine. After the abolition of this requirement there are no more degree theses until 1873, when the first Ph.D. was awarded, the subject of the pioneer dissertation being the heat of the sun. The remarkable quality of the theses presented for the bachelor's degree with honors has led to the preservation of an ever-increasing percentage of them in the University Archives. Lectures, theses, and prize papers together amount to 6,880 volumes.

For practical purposes, the books published by or for the Harvard University Press are regarded as official publications, although the copies in the file in the Archives are not available for circulation, being treated as the 'record file.' They number at present 1,976 volumes.

The writing of tracts and books about Harvard and Harvard history began at the time of the centennial with Nathan Prince's *Constitution and Government of Harvard College*. That was quickly followed by a burst of revival tracts accusing Harvard of Godlessness, particularly as evidenced by the 'prophaneness' of some of the Commencement parts. During the two centuries which have elapsed there has been a tide of comment and history which is now represented by 966 volumes and portfolios of clippings on the shelves. Historical material relating to specific buildings and similar possessions, and to gifts and bequests, amounts to 294 items.

A dozen years ago there was nowhere a collection of source material in which the historian could trace the growth of collegiate education in the United States. As a consequence, the published descriptions of the state of education in colonial times, and particularly the generalizations in text books, were far from the mark. This induced the Archives staff to gather and organize the material relating to the Harvard curriculum. The resulting collection has sections devoted to admission requirements, scholarships, research funds, prizes and deturs, professorships, Commencement and Class Day, examination papers, laws and regulations, and the course of study.

Although most of the material relating to admissions is buried in more general sections of the archives, and separate publications regarding the requirements did not begin until 1823, this section of the Ar-

chives includes 200 pamphlets and portfolios. The section devoted to Commencement and Class Day, as a source for the history of human knowledge, has been woefully neglected by the historian. In the colonial period it was the custom for the candidates for the bachelor's degree to draw up a set of theses covering the whole scope of academic learning. These theses the Seniors stood ready to defend against all comers. To each candidate for the Master's Degree was assigned a quaestio, or thesis in question form, which he stood ready to defend. The student parts at Commencement consisted mainly of the arguing of these theses. Beginning with a printed list of the subjects argued by the members of the graduating class of 1643, there is, in print or manuscript, a nearly complete record of these subjects down to last year's Commencement program. In these subjects is clearly written the story of mankind from medieval to modern times.

If the manuscripts of these written theses were preserved in early times (we know only that they were 'collected'), they were destroyed in the burning of Harvard Hall. The oldest now in the Archives is one for 1750, but since 1825 the file is almost complete. Kept with them is the similar file of 'exhibition parts,' which were public exercises held twice a year. Since there were commonly thirty Commencement parts and as many Exhibition parts each year, these essays (flavored with some poetry) had to sweep the whole field of knowledge to find fresh subjects. Commencement speeches by dignitaries are fewer, but the file begins with one of 1649. The collection of salutatory and valedictory orations begins with those of 1697. Altogether the Commencement collection consists of 670 items, largely bound volumes of collected parts.

During Harvard's first two centuries entrance examinations were oral, and the student's next four years were unclouded by examinations of any sort. As was the case at Oxford and Cambridge, any lad who could survive four years of college life was awarded his degree automatically. The first printed examination questions in the Archives are those presented to the would-be Freshmen of 1836. After various experimental steps, the examination system as now known developed about 1854, and there are full files of the questions from that year to this, occupying 641 bound volumes and portfolios.

One of the richest sources for the study of the history of education is the file of notes made by students in the course of their studies. The file begins with a photostat copy of the notebook which Michael

Wigglesworth kept in 1650. Even for the early years such notes are common because the lack of printed textbooks compelled the students to make fair copies of older manuscripts, particularly in the physical sciences. Each college generation copied the manuscript text of the last with such additions and deletions as the teaching of their tutors suggested, with the result that the series is a running exposition of the state of education of the period. Of the lecture notes of modern generations, there are preserved samples for each course, usually clean typewritten volumes, and frequently handsomely bound ones. As records of the teaching of the great men of the nineteenth century, these notes are in frequent demand. A few course theses, themes, and compositions, such as a short story which Walter D. Edmonds wrote for Copey's course, are kept as samples or because of special interest. The professors' lecture notes and similar teaching records are usually not so serviceable, but the file begins with lectures read by Wigglesworth and Winthrop two centuries ago.

The first of the books printed by order of the College for the students was the Hebrew grammar of 1735. Probably all of the printed prospectuses for college courses are represented in the collection, and some of them, such as Albert Gallatin's 'Proposals for a Course in French at Harvard College,' 1782, and Henry Adams' syllabus of his course in history, have interest beyond their value as an academic record. This curriculum collection contains 4,118 volumes.

From the point of view of the social historian, perhaps the most interesting section is that relating to student life. Beginning with a commonplace book of 1651, this collection includes diaries, correspondence, reminiscences of student days, both critical and romantic articles, and various administrative circulars and pamphlets issued by the University. To aid research, there are special subject collections, such as student expenses, and college fiction, poetry, satire, and entertainments. This collection is of more than mere antiquarian interest, for such documents as 'The Last Words and Dying Speech of Joseph Willard who was executed in Hollis-Square near Union Hall for high Crimes and misdemeanours, committed against the Sons of Harvard Sept. 1767,' exhibit the great men of the University, in this case President Willard, in a light which is not reflected from more dignified sources. Other collections relate to sports and athletics of all kinds. Here, too, are kept the archives and the printed materials relating to the thousand student and alumni societies which have flourished at one

time or another. The oldest club minutes to survive are those of a religious organization, The Private Meeting Instituted in 1719. This was followed very soon by literary societies which for the next century and a half furnished the chief extra-curricular activity for the student body. The records of the extinct clubs and societies are open for research, and they contain much that is of interest to the historian of literature, and of course to the biographer.

The idea of forming class organizations was unfortunately late in taking hold at Harvard, and did not develop as rapidly as at Yale. The Class of 1814 was perhaps the first to maintain a graduate organization. In a literary sense the class system reached a peak in the *Songs and Poems of the Class of 1829*, but the social activities flourished for a century before the size of the classes brought a decline. For many years each Senior wrote an autobiography and his philosophy of life in a great folio Class Book, and these today afford most interesting summaries of the individual's intellectual development to that stage. The correspondence of the Class secretaries is progressively opened to qualified researchers as the classes become extinct, and it has proved of great value. The autobiographies in the printed Class reports form a unique mass of material of far greater importance than is generally realized. In no other place do fifty thousand men at regular intervals report on their lives and state their philosophies. This entire collection of 'student life' material, including the Class records, contains some 6,497 items, for the most part in the form of boxes of correspondence.

The Class material is closely related to the biographical section, which is organized along lines explained at length in the previous article in the BULLETIN. It includes 417 boxes of clippings and other ephemeral material relating primarily to the less distinguished graduates. The men, chiefly professors, who are known primarily because of their work at Harvard, are represented by 2,718 volumes of biography and boxes of manuscripts, mostly correspondence. Although the larger part of this collection is too recent for use as ordinary research material, the older portions have already been used for work in every branch of human knowledge.

This section contains also minor divisions formed to facilitate research and the answering of routine questions. Representative divisions are 'Harvard Men from Chicago,' 'Child Prodigies at Harvard,' and 'Chinese Students at Harvard.' The largest of these divisions are 'Alumni in the Civil War' and 'Alumni in World War I.' After the

Civil War, the alumni were asked to report their experiences, and these letters often produce useful data on such matters as the presence of an individual at Lee's surrender. The records of the Harvard men in World War II will soon be placed beside the records of their predecessors.

Among the most frequently used materials in the reading room of the Archives are the student and alumni periodicals. Manuscript student periodicals come in with the eighteenth century. The expectancy of life of the student papers is not long, but their variety is wonderful, including such things as the *Harvard Anarchist* (1908), the *Harvard Brewers' Gazette* (1909), and the *Harvard Grind* (1906). In all there are 1,133 volumes, including two sets of some of the more popular.

The collection of Harvard views and photographs includes relevant pictures, from the treasured engravings of colonial days to photographs of recent graduates. While no particular effort is made to collect the latter, such as come to the Archives are kept, in view of the frequent requests for this type of material.

Here, then, is a collection of use not only because it contains everything recoverable relating to Harvard, but because it covers every branch of human knowledge for three centuries. Hardly a subject has escaped the writer of theses, and there is hardly a man engaged in historical research of any kind who does not occasionally run across a thread leading back to the Harvard University Archives.

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