

Harvard: Boarding School to University through Virtue of Librarianship

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Speaking the name of Harvard in the contemporary age invokes imagery of a powerful and elite university, second to none in both physical and intellectual wealth. The place today produces the nation's titans of industry and serves as a fertile social networking hub for the most influential men and women entering into corporate and public space. Seven presidents of the United States studied there, and dozens of more senators, congressmen and electors. Yet Harvard was not always as it is now. In the formative centuries of its history the place was not a university but a college, and was dwarfed by the grandeur of the European places of learning, inhabiting a single, poorly constructed hall, prone to fire hazards. Matthew Battles called Harvard "traditionally little more than a boarding school for elite youth."<sup>1</sup>

This paper aims to examine the critical development which contributed to Harvard's elevation from a colonial school for preachers' sons to an international leader in academia: the expansion, refinement and institutional integration of its library. And at the heart of this latter flourishing are two central veins: the evolution and usage of the catalog system, and the methods and extent of acquisitions. Both faculties began in disarray or neglect, and through their fortification and enrichment, made marriage with the success of the Harvard Corporation. What follows is a brief history of the library, accompanied by precise examination of those significant areas.

Before we begin we must first consider the historiography of the topic at hand. Few sources exist concerning the early history of Harvard College, and those that do are supplied by the institution itself. A query in search of a history of Harvard will return a breadth of records overwhelmingly created by alumni and faculty, often writing contemporaneously to events, imposing a double bias on the historical record. Even fewer

sources exist concerning the library, which in the initial decades of Harvard's existence was nothing more than a single room containing books and was not formally overseen by a keeper. These matters are only further exacerbated by a horrible fire in 1764, which completely destroyed the physical plant of both the library and the Old College.<sup>2</sup> Ultimately the early and formative history of Harvard and the Harvard University Library is a topic which has been neglected by scholarship; no compelling and authoritative history has emerged, and the accounts presented through the Harvard University Press appear to have become uncontested historical fact, as few alternatives present. Harvard did not have a sufficient record keeping apparatus until the mid 1820s, when the president began to publish an annual report. Of course by this time the College, and by extension the library, had already been in existence for nearly two hundred years. These are key facets to consider as we begin our examination.

By 1636 the Massachusetts Bay Colony had become firmly established, and having attended the immediate demands of survival, the Puritan elite looked to ensure the long term viability of their great project: a righteous civilization based upon Christian virtue.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly it was deemed necessary to create a college for the education of a new generation of preachers. In this year the Great and General Court of the Massachusetts Bay Colony gave license to establish New College and by 1638 land, funding and volumes were acquired through the bequest of the late John Harvard.<sup>4</sup> John Harvard was an English-borne minister, a graduate of Emmanuel College, who immigrated to the colony a year before but soon contracted tuberculosis and succumbed to disease. By his death and charity the College fellows inherited four hundred volumes, seven hundred and seventy nine English pounds and half of the late minister's estate.<sup>5</sup> In

such a fashion the institution was furnished with grounds, and in 1639 the school was renamed to honor the memory of John's donation, so becoming Harvard College. By 1640 the College was established and in a letter one fellow spoke to the function and utility of the institution: "To advance Learning and perpetuate it to Posterity; dreading to leave an illiterate Ministry to the Churches."<sup>6</sup>

Accorded to this mandate the College offered a classical education with an emphasis on Christian theology. Graduates would have studied Greek, Latin, Hebrew, philology and philosophy in order to improve their knowledge and so better follow the scriptures. The intended product of coursework at Harvard was a literate, independent minister, conscious of the great Western minds from Aristotle and Plato to Seneca, Erasmus and Thomas Aquinas. Not to learn the Bible was considered a sin and the Puritans championed interpretation of scripture as a means of becoming a more pious and devout Christian.<sup>7</sup> The Harvard graduates learned grammar, logic and rhetoric from the great Pagan minds so as to read the Bible as it was meant to be read: through a lens of reason and wisdom. While a generation teaching in literacy was afforded to the general population in order to establish a faithful Christian society, leaders were needed for the continuation of such an education. To this task Harvard College was charged. In June of 1650 the Great and General Court of Massachusetts approved a charter which formally incorporated the president and fellows of the College. This act resulted in the formation of the first corporation in the Americas, hereafter referred to as simply the Corporation.<sup>8</sup>

The Harvard collection begins with John's bequeathment of 400 volumes, a substantial library for that time, one of the largest in the country. Of this collection only one record, John Downname's *Christian Warfare*, is extant to this day, the rest reduced to

ash by the 1764 fire.<sup>9</sup> By 1642 the first permanent structures were erected on the grounds at Harvard. The College facilities were hailed by one observer as being “too gorgeous for a Wilderness and yet too mean in other apprehensions for a Colledg [sic].”<sup>10</sup> A room was dedicated to house the Harvard collection, as well as provide what was deemed ample room for expansion, on the second floor of the college in the eastern hall. Kenneth Carpenter argues that while no contemporary description of the library room exists, it can be safe to assume that it would have been modeled after the libraries of Trinity College at Cambridge, as five of the original overseers were educated in that Puritan stronghold.<sup>11</sup> Harvard illustrator F.W. Hartwell attempted in the late 1930s to conceptualize what the library may have looked like.<sup>12</sup> The library room would have been constituted as a series of lecterns, benches and desks, comprising a room twenty feet wide and thirty feet long. There would have been a fireplace for heating the room during the brutally cold winters, and tall, shelved windows.

Before the election of Solomon Stoddard as the College’s first librarian in 1662 there was no singular individual appointed to oversee the books as “keeper.” While undergraduates were barred access to the library, fellows and faculty could access the library with few restrictions or protocols.<sup>13</sup> This lax policy concerning the library resulted in a large number of overdue books; it was for this very reason that the aforementioned volume *Christian Warfare* was spared from fire.<sup>14</sup>

In 1671 the Corporation began construction on a new structure to replace the original college facilities at Cambridge as the original construction was prone to structural failures and subsequently necessitated expensive repairs. Shoddy craftsmanship resulted in weak support for the ceiling, which the records of the governor and company

of the Massachusetts Bay indicate collapsed sometime in 1677.<sup>15</sup> The library was moved to what was soon known as the New College. Daniel Gookin, the third librarian, was contracted by the Corporation to relocate the books for a modest sum of two pounds, ten pence.<sup>16</sup> The new library room was purported to be thirty by forty feet and was located in the central hall of the second floor of the building, although as with the original college, no contemporary description exists.<sup>17</sup>

Now a word on the function and purpose of “library keepers,” the first librarians who served the Corporation. The keeper was traditionally a Harvard graduate and was compensated with a modest salary, although as we have observed with the case of Gookin, it was common for special duties to call for a small additional stipend. The keeper performed the essential works of a custodian (as the Latin *route* implies): he swept and kept clean the collections, delivered books on request, checked stock and ensured books were not overdue. The keeper was not involved in the acquisition or appropriation of volumes but did receive and process gifts to the collection.<sup>18</sup> Gifts were the sole means by which the Harvard library’s collection expanded until 1857, when a fund was established to purchase additional volumes. By that time, Harvard’s traditional model for acquiring volumes had led to the institution being outpaced by the prominent universities of Europe, and old means of acquisition were no longer feasible. This topic will be explored following a further survey of the history of the library.

In January of 1764 a fierce storm battered Cambridge. On the twenty second fire afflicted Harvard college, utterly destroying the institution. One broadside lamented the destruction as “the most ruinous lot [the College] ever, met with since its foundation” and reported that little over four hundred volumes survived the conflagration.<sup>19</sup> Those four

hundred odd records which did survive had been overdue or were gifts not yet unpacked.<sup>20</sup> The catastrophe at Cambridge sent shockwaves through the colonies: Harvard was by that point one of only a few colleges, and the foremost in the education of the New England aristocracy, ministers and other men of note. Accordingly an unyielding influx of donations and gifts were generated by the people of the colonies in hope of restoring Harvard's position; John Hancock donated thirteen hundred volumes, New Hampshire seven hundred, and hundreds more from Bostonians.<sup>21</sup>

A crucial river of donations also derived from European sources, particularly from England and Scotland. Kenneth Carpenter reports that Harvard had by the mid 1700s become a favorite colonial charity of those dominions. In one letter cited by Carpenter Nathaniel Lardner writes to Ezra Stiles:

“For now the Harvard College is the object of the regard and attention of those who concern themselves for [New England], and in behalf of which we have received importunate requests from several, asking for a supply of books of all sorts and mathematical instruments, etc.”<sup>22</sup>

Perhaps the greatest benefactor to Harvard library following the 1764 was Thomas Hollis. An English philosopher and author known for popularizing the writings of seminal Enlightenment-era political authors such as John Locke by being a passionate advocate and circulator of their works, Hollis was also a supporter of the American scholar, the republicanism movement and colonial schools. For a decade following the fire Hollis donated unknown thousands of books. Yet his most important contribution was not the vast number of the books he donated, but the topical breadth contained therein. While Harvard's library traditionally was comprised of divinity and grammar

tracts intended as textbooks to school young men, Hollis introduced classical works, political treatises, as well as works on agriculture, geology, medicine, and crafts.<sup>23</sup> In this fashion Hollis planted a seed of greater knowledge that would later flourish as the university foundation. Hollis also bequeathed five hundred pounds to act as an endowed fund in order to purchase new books for the school on a yearly basis. This fund is Harvard's oldest, and continues to pay for new books to this day.<sup>24</sup>

In 1765 construction began on a new campus, following the General Court claim of responsibility for the fire; the Court had taken refuge at the college following a smallpox epidemic in Boston and was present at the time of the catastrophe.<sup>25</sup> The library was placed in New Harvard Hall adjacent to the philosophy school on the second floor, and by 1815 occupied the entire floor, spanning one hundred and seven by forty feet.<sup>26</sup> The new library was richly furnished with republican artworks including neoclassical columns, busts of great men and paintings depicting Greco-Roman moral tales.

In 1775 Boston was occupied by British troops following the emergence of insurrection and rebellion there. Patriot forces retreated into the country and eventually established headquarters at Cambridge. Occupation by militia and continental forces threatened the collections, by both enticing British injury, as well as by heightening the possibility of accidental fire. Accordingly it was deemed by the overseers of the Corporation that evacuation was in order. A large manor house in Concord was ultimately selected as the temporary site to store the library, the personal residence of one Humphrey Barrett, an officer in the militia and later continental army. The Corporation relocated the library back to Cambridge in June of the 1776, but was not fully reconstituted until 1778.<sup>27</sup>

Up until 1799 the library at Harvard had very little oversight monitoring its operation. While a board of overseers had been appointed by the Corporation as early as 1766, no reports or evidence is extant to substantiate the presence of formal oversight activity prior to 1799.<sup>28</sup> It follows then that the 1799 annual report of the Board of Overseers Committee to Visit the Library is an illuminating portrait of an institution otherwise scarcely reported in its early history. The report spoke chiefly to an ongoing issue at the library: general lack of accountability for overdue or otherwise absent volumes. Other issues raised by the report included a need for greater cleanliness and “neat order.”<sup>29</sup> The Overseers Committee continued to conduct annual investigations into the state of the library and to take inventory of the volumes for many more decades, until 1854, when the task became untenable.

In 1814 the library expanded access to freshmen, permitting them to take out volumes from a limited list of works. Additionally, borrowers were required to take out books in Latin or Greek if they chose English ones. Furthermore, books could only be borrowed on every third Friday of the month.<sup>30</sup> Kenneth Carpenter claims that this decision to expand access had a political motive rather than interest of progressive service founding it: the following year saw a report by Librarian Andrews Norton, purportedly endorsed by President Kirkland, urging the Corporation to allocate funds and resources for the establishment of a library for students. Carpenter reports that the chief arguments posited by Norton concerned the preservation of valuable books, as well as emptying the library of “mere[ly] curious” students.<sup>31</sup> Regardless of initial motivations, the “student’s library” eventually totaled three thousand volumes by the time Gore Hall was opened in 1841.

In 1817 Harvard Law School was opened. The institution's central selling point was that prospective students "[would] have access to a complete law library to be obtained for their use."<sup>32</sup> Accordingly a new library was created at Harvard, though its initial collection was anything but a "complete law library," constituted as a small selection of books on loan from the College Library. The library would eventually comprise over eleven thousand volumes and was proclaimed as being the most complete law library in the union by the Visiting Committee in 1846.<sup>33</sup>

By the 1820s the librarians at Harvard were acting professionally. That is to say, they began to write policy, create and develop library services, became involved in the emerging academic field of library science, and to dictate the acquisition of collections. While the old library keeper position was part-time employment involved primarily with the duties of a clerk, this new breed of librarian was fully engaged. Andrews Norton (1813-1821), Joseph G. Cogswell (1821-1823) Charles Folsom (1823-1826) and Benjamin Peirce (1826-1831), librarians of Harvard, wrote reports to the Corporation advocating the need for expanded salaries to meet the demands of the profession, additional support to attend to what was deemed a struggling library system and that serious attention be paid to the various deficiencies of the institution. This spirit of progressive, active involvement married to the function and service of the library was a novel conception: prior keepers were not expected to act as developers but as workers. While these men never received the support they quested for and concluded their careers elsewhere, their example inspired and served precedent for their successors (such as Langdon Sibley and Justin Winsor) who did in fact see to the full professionalization of their office in the following decades. Under Sibley a series of library regulations were

codified and disseminated in 1839.<sup>34</sup> These rules came to govern the library and instructed users on procedures, penalties for overdue books, prohibitions and expectations.

During this same time the Harvard library transformed from a few libraries to an expanding system of federated institutions under a scheme of “coordinated decentralization.”<sup>35</sup> By the early 1800s the various schools of the College had acquired their own specialized collections, often comprised of loans or duplicates from the College library. These collections eventually necessitated the creation of new libraries as they expanded, which likely entailed the dedication of a room and the election of a librarian. The earliest federated libraries did not receive separate buildings – that came much later in the history of Harvard, with several notable exceptions, well into the 20th century.<sup>36</sup> While the librarian of Harvard initially performed the administrative and oversight duties regarding the fledgling federation, a separate, dedicated position eventually was created in 1910: Director of the University Library.<sup>37</sup>

The first dedicated library building at Harvard was Gore Hall, which opened in 1841. A stone structure of monumental proportions, arched in the style of a medieval cathedral, Gore Hall was only fitted with a single furnace to fight off the blistery winter winds. Green mold grew in the dark, drafty halls. The building was dedicated to student access and was at capacity within two decades, necessitating the librarians to pile books on the floor following the grand acquisitions of the 1860s and 1870s.<sup>38</sup> In 1877 the library was expanded with the addition of a series of iron stacks (a feature first pioneered in the Americas by Harvard). Gore Hall was demolished and replaced by the Widener library in 1915.

In the 1840s we also see the emergence of student society libraries. These small libraries are similar to the historical social libraries and were constituted as specialized collections catered around a club or fraternity. The student society libraries served as the nucleus of a hospitable community, as well as a means by which students could avail themselves to alternative facets of education.<sup>39</sup> While the student libraries at Harvard never exceeded the breadth and prominence of those at Yale or Amherst, they are significant in that they further diversified the overall collection within the campus.

A history of the Harvard library cannot be considered complete without words dedicated to a pivotal mover in the institution's development: Justin Winsor. Winsor served as librarian from 1877 to 1897 and was a key force behind transforming Harvard from a college to a university and its library from an "archival function to an instructional one."<sup>40</sup> While in the past the Harvard education entailed utilizing the library's collection as textbooks, Winsor envisioned the library as a "workshop" for creative research, independent education and frequent reference.<sup>41</sup> This was a notion deeply supported by President Charles Eliot, who argued that the library should function as the "heart of the university" in that it would inform the scholarship of the institution.<sup>42</sup> Harvard library accordingly became modern by the policy changes of Winsor: the annual inventory of books and cleanings were done away with in lieu of uninterrupted service, extended a system for reservation of volumes, created a formalized system of reference interview, added bibliographic entries to the *Bulletin*, streamlined the process by which books were borrowed, imposed strict professional expectations on the librarians under his employment and introduced interlibrary loan. Furthermore, he ensured funding was dedicated to the creation of department, classroom and lab libraries.<sup>43</sup> Winsor's measures

were designed to improve service by making the Harvard library collections immediately accessible. The library was by the end of his term successfully integrated into the educational system at Harvard, contributing critically to its maturation as a university. As Harvard was the premier college in the United States during those years, the changes implemented by Winsor had a sweeping influence on the rest of American academia and the seminal practices and methods of the ALA.<sup>44</sup>

In 1880 Winsor petitioned the Corporation to centralize the system of libraries, to create a unified, coherent collection stored in various institutions dependant to the College Library. The Corporation voted in favor of Winsor's plan, which concerned itself with positioning the Librarian of the University as a screening mechanism in accepting or denying the acquisitions of dependant bodies. The latter of which had until that point used appropriated funds at discretion to expand their collections.<sup>45</sup> Although Winsor's plan was officially endorsed by the Corporation, at a local level it was not adhered to: departmental libraries either were exempted from or violated the mandate, and statutory neglect was a common response from the librarians who succeeded Winsor.<sup>46</sup> Centralization of the federation would never again have significant attention paid to it.

Between 1900 and 1902 President Charles Eliot struggled to find a solution to the issue of minimal library space. Gore Hall, the central College library, had by that point become astonishingly encumbered with volumes, nigh unusable and many times beyond capacity. Yet in those years Harvard was not a bastion of wealth as it is today, and little funds were spared for the creation of a new library building. Funds which were available were directed to renovating Gore in an attempt to band aid an increasingly evident deficiency. President Eliot suggesting storing "dead books," volumes which were rarely

accessed and essentially taking up room, at offsite storage locations on cheap land.<sup>47</sup> The Corporation formed a committee to consider this project. The committee found that the notion was "inconsistent with the interests of learning, if it implies the destruction or removal of the so-called dead books, or even the storing of them in such a way that they are not both well classified and directly accessible by scholars."<sup>48</sup> Eliot's project ultimately failed, even given his subsequent attempts at lobbying for its implementation. This is perhaps a fortuitous outcome, as its adoption would have stunted the expanded access that Winsor had worked to achieve.

By 1911 the crisis of overcapacity libraries reached a head at Harvard. An article in the *Boston American* shed public light on the issue, opening with a half-serious wanted ad begging for "some kind millionaire" such as Carnegie or Rockefeller to fund the construction of a new library.<sup>49</sup> The article went on to lament "only a few of the books can be kept in the gray, old, ugly library building [referring to Gore Hall] and journals are kept in 40 small libraries in various University buildings." Even as late as the aforementioned year the public held great concerns, as it did in the past (we might recall the outpouring of donations following the 1764 fire or perhaps even more fundamentally: the Corporation's civic roots), about the fate of Harvard – the place was still considered an invaluable educational system to be nourished for the common sake.

In 1912 the Titanic was fatally struck by an iceberg. Harry Elkins Widener perished onboard, and from his death a phoenix rose to redress the poverty of Harvard. Widener had willed that his book collection be bequeathed to the University library on the condition that space existed for such a gift. Eleanor Wilkins Widener, Harry's mother, a lover of books in her own right, took it upon herself to fund the construction and donate

in memoriam a new library to accomplish these ends. Designed by Horace Trumbauer, the Harry Elkins Widener Memorial Library was opened in 1915 and was a spectacular sight, a temple of neoclassical design, sharply accentuated with federal brick and monumental columns. Gore Hall, having served its usefulness, was demolished following the transfer of its volumes to the student mess hall Randall Hall, to be replaced by Widener.<sup>50</sup> The Widener would come to symbolize the erudition and majesty of Harvard and soon became one of the most valuable research libraries in the country. In 1914 an independent survey of Harvard library was undertaken by the graduate students of the Business School. The survey found that Harvard would do well to benefit from the creation of a reference service. The Reference Department was accordingly created at the Widener, although not fully expanded until the 1930s. In 1916 the country's first University recreational reading room, the Farnsworth, was experimented at the Widener. The room was created with the sole purpose of aiding in "forming the reading habit" and offered comfortable chairs, spacious accommodations and a social atmosphere intended for recreational reading.<sup>51</sup> While the overseers and faculty were initially unsure of the viability of this venture and questioned whether the room would be used at all, the Farnsworth garnered immediate popularity.<sup>52</sup> The extent of its popularity is demonstrated insomuch as these sorts of rooms are a common feature in the vast majority of contemporary universities.

Now for a few words on the man responsible for the maturation of Harvard into a modern research university. Archibald Cary Coolidge served as Director of the Harvard University Library from 1910 to 1928 and began his career at Harvard as a professor of history. Coolidge's academic work was based upon the notion that "every venture into a

new area of scholarship and teaching should be backed up by library materials.”<sup>53</sup> That is to say, Coolidge was a proponent for the citation of primary documents in research, and considered histories constructed in such a manner to be robust works.<sup>54</sup> This was a conception of academic work not universal at the time (As it is now, attributed to the man), and Coolidge found the Harvard library system deficient in offering the resources necessary for undergraduates to perform serious academic study.

Accordingly Coolidge began a frenzy of gift giving to the library, donating a vast wealth of primary documents and other volumes, especially those pertaining to topics of Slavica (the study of which he also pioneered), Ottoman history, Eastern studies and the early colonial period.<sup>55</sup><sup>56</sup> Coolidge’s activism inspired others to make gifts of like cosmopolitan collections: the William Henry Schofield collection of over ten thousand volumes of Icelandic lore and the H. Nelson Gay collection on the history of the Italian Risorgimento and the Konrad von Mauer collection of Old Norse law and Scandinavian history, to name a few of dozens. Under Coolidge the collections at Harvard expanded to cover international studies, and with that extension, the nature of Harvard education evolved. Indeed, the nature of the library collections, as well as the sort of services provided by the librarians, would mold and underlie the very nature of education at Harvard. While in the earliest years the Harvard library contained the volumes necessary for the education of a Puritan minister, as volumes of greater breadth were acquired by the passionate activism of a few bookmen, Harvard’s studies came to cover the whole universe of knowledge. Accordingly Harvard became a *university* catering to the schooling of engineers, doctors, lawyers, philosophers, historians, musicians, scientists and the whole host of scholars.

The history of acquisitions and their role in the change of Harvard from a “boarding school” to University is best understood in consideration of the Corporation’s historical attitudes. Up until the early 1900s the Corporation believed that the library of Harvard should remain suited for the education of undergraduates, streamlined to a manageable size, and maintained a frugal, nigh austere, attitude about the purchase of new volumes. It was believed that endowments alone would accommodate the need of new literature where necessary and that the classical works would continue to serve as enduring textbooks for the education of the students. This attitude is professed no more clearly than in a letter between New York Public Library director J.C. Billings and William Coolidge Lane dated to June 21<sup>st</sup> 1904:

As regards to the future of the library, I think it is important that you should understand the frame of mind of the present Corporation... there is not a single member of the Corporation who is converted to the opinion that it would be expedient for Harvard to maintain an immense, very comprehensive library in the College Yard.<sup>57</sup>

While the document in question is modern, the philosophy that the library should be filled with works essential to the education of undergraduates, and not those conducive to research and professional development, prevailed from the seminal days of the Corporation. The Corporation’s views would come to be challenged and defeated by a small but dedicated cadre of academics, such as Sibley, Winsor and Coolidge, to the prosperity of both parties.

In 1723 Harvard published a catalog of collections at the library, the first such publication in colonies. The catalog was prepared by Librarian Joshua Gee for a fee of

twenty pounds and contained thirty one hundred titles.<sup>58</sup> The works were categorized by format, from octavo to folio. There is no data on the number of volumes prior to this date, other than the fact that there would have been at least four hundred volumes bequeathed by John Harvard by the time the College first was founded. While the number of volumes was impressive by colonial standards, the library would have been dwarfed by even the most modest of European universities.

Benjamin Franklin recognized this fact in 1755 and urged the Corporation to establish a subscription fund to purchase the newest and most relevant volumes for the library.<sup>59</sup> Franklin argued that an annual service of “five and twenty” subscribers, affording four pistoles each, could rightfully provide a healthy influx of new records to the library. The Corporation did not take Benjamin up on his offer, as the library was not perceived to be an institution requiring regular nourishment.<sup>60</sup>

In the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century following the influx of gifts subsequent the 1764 fire the collection at Harvard was gaining some breadth and the first attempts were made at cataloging the collection in a more meaningful way. The first catalog created during this period was undertaken by Librarian Andrew Eliot in 1765. Eliot’s manuscript catalog was alphabetical in nature but soon became untenable as donations flowed in, for it had no provision for shelfmark.<sup>61</sup> The Mayhew catalog, probably developed alongside the Eliot catalog, was not as elaborate as the latter, but indicated book locations.<sup>62</sup> In the 1780s Overseer Amos Adams attempted to improve upon these increasingly difficult to manage Eliot and Mayhew catalogs by creating a new system including provenance, shelfmark, title and year of publication.<sup>63</sup>

In 1790 the first classified catalog was created. Herein we observe the beginnings of a service tradition at Harvard library: staff began to sort materials by subject in an attempt to increase access. The *Catalogus Bibliothecae Harvardianae* contained ninety eight hundred entries sorted under sixty topics, and was the first catalog to be printed.<sup>64</sup> Therein contained a collection solely acquired by the activism of men like John Hancock and Thomas Hollis, and the library began to flourish without any intervention by the Corporation. Still, Harvard's library was outmatched by European standards. A letter from George Ticknor as he studied at Gottingen University in 1816 best explains the contrast between 19<sup>th</sup> century Harvard and the European places of learning:

I cannot better explain to you the difference between our University in Cambridge and the one here than by telling you that here I hardly say too much when I say that it consists in the Library, and that in Cambridge the Library is one of the last things thought and talked about, - that here they have forty professors and more than two hundred thousand volumes to instruct them, and in Cambridge twenty professors and less than twenty thousand volumes.<sup>65</sup>

Samuel Shapleigh began the second endowed book fund in 1801 (we might recall Hollis was the first to do so) for poetry in neither Greek nor Latin. This was again, a determined scholar, attempting to advance the Harvard collection beyond its boarding school tendencies by introducing contemporary, varied works.<sup>66</sup> Shapleigh was the first librarian of Harvard library to provide an endowed fund, but as we have seen, would not be the last. His successors followed precedent and became great benefactors of the institution.

The year of 1806-1807 saw acquisitions reach an embarrassing low. According to Kenneth Carpenter an immediate need for periodicals and reference volumes necessitated a response by the traditionally lethargic Corporation. Harvard risked academic irrelevance as the gift giving culture of yesteryear was but a fond memory. A committee was formed in 1814 to remedy the nearly stagnant state of acquisitions and was appropriated funds to purchase necessary new additions on an annual basis.<sup>67</sup> Yet the Corporation gave too little funds, and the status quo was essentially maintained. The situation was such that in 1816 President Kirkland sent out a dire appeal for donations in what amounted to a formal system of panhandling.<sup>68</sup>

Kirkland's petitions stimulated a series of new gifts, including the library's first collections for research and geography (Daniel Christoph Ebeling, 1818) French Americana (David B. Warden, 1823) and Romance languages (George Ticknor, 1827). These gifted collections helped to build an international presence in the library collection. The significance of such gifts is that without such volumes in the library, study of these topics was impossible considering the technologies and resources of the day. Therefore acquisition at Harvard was not simply a means of enrichment, but was a creative educational force.

In 1840 a new innovation in cataloging would buttress the proliferation of the aforementioned knowledge by greatly expanding access to it. Librarian Thaddeus William Harris invented and implemented the "slip catalog," which would eventually come to be known as the card catalog. This was the first cataloging system which included the needs of the user; the slips (later cards) were inserted into wooden drawers

throughout the library for reference.<sup>69</sup> The card catalog system was standard at Harvard library until 1912.

The Subscribed Fund of 1842 was the first successful attempt by the Corporation to acquire new collections.<sup>70</sup> While previous attempts had been abortive or mere attempts at filling gaps in immediately desirous collections, the former Fund garnered seventeen thousand dollars to be used over several years to purchase new volumes. Sadly the money was exhausted by 1860 and the library returned to its former poverty.

An individual who shared George Ticknor's sentiments about Harvard and wished for it to be improved with new volumes was John Langdon Sibley. The latter was Librarian from 1856-1877. Sibley was an unyielding activist when it came to acquisitions, and having recognized the poverty of the institution, began to petition all with a stake in the University for donations during his tenure. He envisioned Harvard as a complete American library, having at least one copy of every map, book or volume pertaining to the nation. In *Letter to the Committee of the Association of the Alumni Appointed to Take into Consideration the State of the College Library* of 1859 Sibley reprinted an appeal he had distributed at the 1856 Commencement, lamenting that "Daily applications from all parts of the United States are constantly revealing [Harvard's] poverty."<sup>71</sup> Sibley's constant devotion to pleading the case of Harvard's library saw to a new influx of donations so that by the end of his term the institution had expanded to nearly four hundred thousand volumes.<sup>72</sup> Most prominent of the new endowments was the William Gray fund, which offered five thousand dollars a year to purchase new books, a commitment which dwarfed the original general fund for acquisitions by six times. The William Gray endowment was used to acquire a well rounded collection at

Harvard library and made possible the introduction of various new schools of instruction. Here again we witness the evolution of Harvard toward that of a University by virtue of librarianship. When the William Gray funds were exhausted, Harvard once more returned to poverty, and following exposés by concerned periodicals including the *Nation* and *Appleton's Journal*, saw to another influx of donations in the 1870s.

Between the 1870s and the tenure of Coolidge a number of other significant donations contributed in the maturation of Harvard library. The Ivan Panin Collection of 1896 greatly expanded the library's wealth of Slavica (synergized by the work of then-Professor Coolidge), Professor George Pierce Baker's David Garrick collection formed the center of a new theatre collection, while Arthur H. Cole's Slater Mills collection helped to inform the basis of the business school library. Later decades would see the library nourished by a combination of endowments and Corporation appropriated funds as Coolidge lead the way for the realization of Harvard as a research University necessitating serious library funding.

Ultimately the success of Harvard is married to the developments of its library, the activism of its staff and the innovations adapted to extend access to it. While the general population might consider the schema of knowledge to begin with the intelligentsia and then follow dissemination into records, the example of Harvard demonstrates that quite the contrary is true. The class selection and sophisticated of study left something sorely to be desired at Harvard College in its earliest years, and as the library expanded, new types of study were possible. New records of a cosmopolitan breadth seeded the work of new schools at Harvard and provided students of those schools with a subject matter to consider and internalize. In a time without the various

technologies we have come to take for granted in the contemporary age, which allow institutions and even individuals free access to great universes of knowledge, the volumes themselves were vessels for discovery in the formative years of Harvard. Accordingly, the acquisition and sorting of new records at Harvard library served as a foundation for the fundamental nature of the study performed there. And behind the acquisitions and the methods of cataloging were dedicated librarians who fought against the grain of the Corporation's apathy to ensure the excellence of their institution.

Through their hard campaign these men succeeded not only in giving of their own collections and funds to enrich the library, but also risked their careers by writing bold reports to the Corporation in an attempt at elevating their position. Once accepted into a new niche as policy maker and professional, they lobbied to properly transform Harvard into an international university with a complete research library. Librarians of Harvard were the leading innovators of catalog systems and under Justin Winsor, library services. In many ways Harvard library was a laboratory for the development of library science, where more theoretical treatises were adapted in practice. At the very least Harvard became the first institution to adapt prevalent library features already in place in Europe, and was the leader for inspiring other American academic institutions to follow suit by example. The impetus for the enduring air of charity guiding the many benefactors of the institution dates back to the College's civic roots as a school for the education of young American statesmen and community pillars. Nevertheless, this charity was the lifeblood of Harvard in the face of almost perpetual poverty and conservatism on the part of the Corporation. From modest and struggling colonial College to one of the foremost and most prestigious Universities in the world, librarianship served as a stable rudder.

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