

HARVARD UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

# Letters

NOVEMBER 2004



Mermaid Club  
Rerere House  
May 28, 1891.

*Ms Howe*

In this issue:

On the Cover:

**George Santayana (attributed)**

Watercolor sketch, 1891

*Harvard University Archives*

This image, a watercolor sketch of a corner of Harvard Yard, is attributed to the philosopher, writer, and former Harvard professor George Santayana (Class of 1886). The sketch appears on the cover of the program printed for an eight-course dinner and meeting held by the Mermaid Club on May 28, 1891. The location was Boston's Revere House, a hotel that stood in Bowdoin Square (the site of today's Bowdoin station on the MBTA Blue Line) until 1919.

Little is known of the Mermaid Club, which is thought to have been established for recent graduates around 1888. M. A. DeWolfe Howe (Class of 1887) wrote in his 1941 memoir, *A Venture to Remembrance*, that George Pierce Baker (Class of 1887), who was beginning his teaching career in the English Department at Harvard, organized the club to cultivate a serious interest in drama. Club members—including Santayana—met in Baker's rooms in Grays Hall and listened to one another's talks on a range of subjects related to drama. The club seems to have disbanded in 1891 or 1892. It is believed that the club's name is based on London's Mermaid Club, a literary club begun by Sir Walter Raleigh.

As a footnote to Harvard history, George Pierce Baker's interest in teaching drama was not greatly encouraged by the University leaders of his day. Though he was instrumental in inaugurating the Harvard Theatre Collection in 1901, his now-famous playwriting course, the "47 Workshop" of 1906, was, significantly, offered at Radcliffe and not on the Harvard campus. Unable to persuade Harvard to offer a degree in playwriting, Baker eventually moved on to Yale, chaired that university's nascent drama department (today's Yale School of Drama), and became known as the foremost teacher of playwriting in America.

With a mission to document, provide access to, and preserve the historical materials of the oldest institution of higher learning in the United States, the Harvard University Archives is the largest of any academic archive in the US. It reflects the steady vitality of the University in an ever-changing world. Generations of extraordinary people from 1636 to the present—students, faculty, and administrators—created records documenting teaching, learning, and research across a variety of disciplines; social life and culture; governance; and public service.

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# A Letter from the President of Harvard University



Lawrence H. Summers

Dear Friends—

On October 1, as we rededicated Widener Library, I had the pleasure of speaking with many of you about the vital importance of the library, its massive holdings, its unique importance to the Harvard community, and its place in the larger scholarly world. I'd like to reiterate some of those thoughts here.

There is a lesson that I learned about a month ago on my tour of Widener Library with Nancy Cline. And the lesson is this: the right way to do things is to do them in the best possible way. Thanks to all of you who have provided critical support for the Widener renovation, Harvard has been able to do just that. We didn't do half a job. We didn't cut the costs on materials. We didn't decide that it wasn't important to provide for technology. We did it right, and people many years from now are going to be glad that you made this far-sighted renovation possible.

Amid Widener's miles of shelves, we are in the presence of some of the most daring minds and most compelling voices in history. Cervantes resides on Level C-West, six floors below Confucius and seven below Sophocles. Chaucer and Jane Austen are neighbors on Level 1-East, two floors below W. E. B. Du Bois and two above Charles Darwin and Marie Curie.

In rededicating Widener, we celebrate not just a building, not just a place, but

a central and indispensable element in the enterprise of learning: a library, and all of the living treasures that it holds for us, and for generations past and future.

We live in a time that some call an electronic age, when computers and the Internet are said to be transforming the way we learn and the way we live. At such a time, it is of critical importance to affirm the matchless power of the book to change the life of the scholar who reads the book, to change the life of our nation, and to change the world. And we must, as a community, recognize our responsibility to create, nurture, and sustain opportunities for solitary study and the kind of quiet contemplation of texts that elevates our gaze and lengthens our views.

We live in a time of enormous excitement in the sciences, when genomes and stem cells and nanotechnology all offer the promise of changing the way in which we live. At such a time, it's more important than ever to recognize and reaffirm one thing: At the very heart of the University lies an enduring commitment to humanistic learning that no other institution in our society maintains. It is a commitment to forms of understanding that we can never have—no matter what progress science may make—without intensive immersion in the study of literature, philosophy, and language, of history, religion, music and art.

*continued on page 4*

Archibald MacLeish, Harvard's Boylston Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory in years past, wrote in a celebrated essay on the library of books as "reports" on "the mystery of things." The "true library," wrote MacLeish, brings these "reports" into "a kind of wholeness." The library stands as "a silent and enduring affirmation that great reports still speak and not alone, but somehow altogether." Since its very beginning, this University has taken great pride in bringing those great reports together.

The Harry Elkins Widener Memorial Library was constructed in 1915. It was a complicated and difficult time in the world, when wisdom was needed, when the lessons of the past needed to be learned and to be heeded, and when the choices this nation made would shape and influence the histories of people everywhere. The ideas collected in this library made an important and great contribution to the succeeding century.

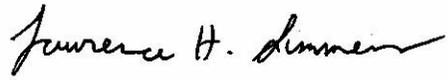
This library was reconstructed in 2004. It is again a difficult time in the world. Let us join in the hope that this extraordinary library can look forward to many more decades of imaginative learning, inspiration, and wisdom. And may it continue to demonstrate, from day to day and from generation to generation, the power of those great reports in the stacks below both to deepen and to

enlighten the mystery of things and point us closer towards the goal we will never fully reach: Veritas.

Three hundred and sixty-six years ago, a benefactor left half of his estate to a fledgling college in a cow yard. What is more, he gave that college the entire contents of his library, some 400 volumes. It is for that act of munificence—for that supreme expression of confidence in the importance of learning and in the importance of libraries to learning—that this College and this University are named.

And so, to each of you who has ever taken down a book from Widener's shelves, to each of you who has helped make it possible for those books to sit on those shelves and to educate those who open them, to each of you who has written one of those books, or has written about one of those books, or has been moved by one of those books to think new thoughts or pursue new paths, to each of you who has recognized what a timeless treasure we have in Widener Library and who has contributed in some way to making it great, let me say—personally and on behalf of the University—thank you.

Yours sincerely,



Lawrence H. Summers



President Lawrence H. Summers with Katherine B. Loker LHD 2000 at the Widener rededication on October 1.

# A Unique and Compelling Opportunity: Harvard's Pilot Project with Google

Harvard University is embarking on a collaboration with Google that could harness Google's search technology to provide to both the Harvard community and the larger public a revolutionary new information location tool to find materials available in libraries. In the coming months, Google will collaborate with Harvard's libraries on a pilot project to digitize a substantial number of the 15 million volumes held in the University's extensive library system. Google will provide online access to the full text of those works that are in the public domain. In related agreements, Google will launch similar projects with Oxford, Stanford, the New York Public Library, and the University of Michigan. An FAQ detailing the Harvard pilot program with Google is available at <http://hul.harvard.edu>.

The pilot will provide the information and experience on which the Harvard Corporation and senior Harvard administrators can base a decision whether to go forward with a large-scale digitization program. Any such decision will reflect the fact that Harvard's library holdings are among the University's core assets, and that the magnitude of those holdings is unique among university libraries anywhere in the world. The stewardship of these holdings is of paramount importance. If the pilot is deemed successful, Harvard will explore a long-term program with Google through which the vast majority of the University's library books would be digitized and included in Google's searchable database. Google will bear the direct costs of digitization in the pilot project.

By combining the skills and library collections of Harvard University with the innovative search skills and capacity of Google, a long-term program has the potential to create an important public good. According to Harvard President Lawrence H. Summers, "Harvard has the greatest university library in the world. If this experiment is successful, we have the

potential to provide the world's greatest system for dissemination as well."

In addition, there would be special benefits to the Harvard community.

Plans call for the eventual development of a link allowing Google users at Harvard to connect directly to the HOLLIS catalog for information on the location and availability at Harvard of works identified through a Google search. This would merge the search capacity of the Internet with the deep research collections at Harvard into one seamless resource—a development especially important for undergraduates who often see the library and the Internet as alternative and perhaps rival sources of information.

Eventually, Harvard users would benefit from far better access to the 5 million books located at the Harvard Depository (HD). If the University undertakes the long-term program, Harvard users would gain online access to the full text of out-of-copyright books stored at HD. For books still in copyright, our users would gain the ability to search for small snippets of text and, possibly, to view tables of contents. In short, the Harvard student or faculty member would gain some of the advantages of browsing that remote storage of books at HD cannot currently provide.

According to Sidney Verba, Carl H. Pforzheimer University Professor and Director of the University Library, "The prospect of a large-scale digitization of Harvard's library books does not in any way diminish the University's commitment to the collection and preservation of books as physical objects. The digital copy will not be a substitute for the books themselves. We will continue actively to acquire materials in all formats and we will continue to conserve them. In fact, as part of the pilot we are developing criteria for identifying books that are too fragile for digitizing and for selecting them out of the project.

"It is clear," Verba continued, "that the new century presents unparalleled challenges and opportunities to Harvard's libraries. Our pilot program with Google can prove to be a vital and revealing first step in a lengthy and rewarding process that will benefit generations of scholars and others. You will be hearing more from me about this experiment as work progresses."

October 1, 2004

## The Widener Rededication

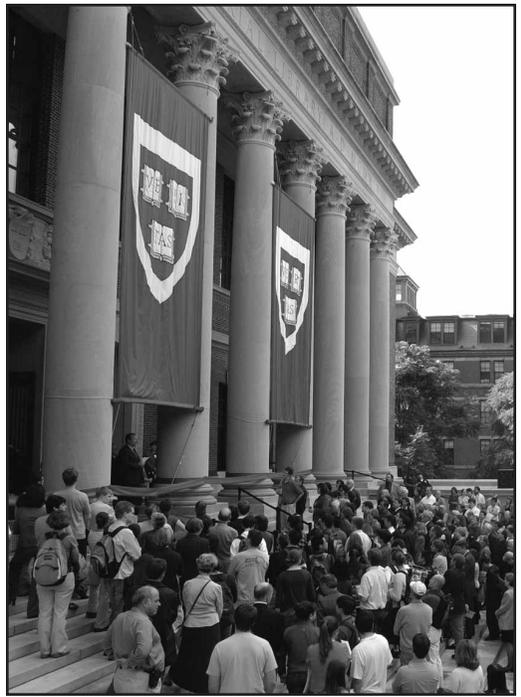
At 1:30 pm Friday, October 1, 2004, the Harvard community gathered for the rededication of the Harry Elkins Widener Memorial Library. Crowds assembled in Tercentenary Theatre for remarks by Harvard President Lawrence H. Summers, FAS Dean William C. Kirby, and HCL's Roy E. Larsen Librarian Nancy M. Cline. After a ribbon-cutting ceremony that featured Katherine B. Loker LHD 2000, Dareema Jenkins '05, Matthew Gibson '05, and Nancy Cline, the University's flagship library was officially rededicated.

That evening, alumni/ae, friends, and faculty gathered in Widener to celebrate the rededication and honor those, past and present, whose enduring commitments make Widener Library a world treasure.

The rededication of the Harry Elkins Widener Memorial Library marked the completion of an extensive, five-year renovation that upgraded the 89-year-old building's systems and renewed it for another century of service.

Opened in 1915, the library was a generous gift to Harvard from Eleanor Elkins Widener in memory of her son Harry, AB 1907. At that time, the building was considered a state-of-the-art facility, in which light and air generously circulated through the stacks. With advances in the field of preservation, light and air and the accompanying dirt and fluctuations in temperature and humidity were identified as hazardous to the life span of library materials. The need to address issues around preservation, as well as user space, security, technology, and programs and services, prompted the renovation.

The comprehensive renovations were made possible by the generosity of alumni/ae and friends who, inspired by the Widener legacy, are investing in the future of Harvard and its extraordinary libraries.



On October 1, the rededication activities began on the Widener steps.



Suzanne Battit MBA '92 and Carl Martignetti '81, MBA '85



Emmanuel Akyeampong, Harvard College Professor in history and African and African American studies, and Patricia Powell



Sanjay Patel '83, SM '83, and Megumi Oka '81



Nancy M. Cline, Roy E. Larsen Librarian of Harvard College; Dudley Fishburn '68, chairman of the Library Visiting Committee; and Sidney Verba '53, Carl H. Pforzheimer University Professor and Director of the University Library



*Katherine B. Loker LHD 2000, Sheria Dranise Smith '05, and Dareema Jenkins '05*



*William C. Kirby, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, and Mary Gellert HRPBA '57*



*Harriet L. Weissman and Paul M. Weissman '52*



*Florence Fearington HRPBA '61 and Sam Butler '51, LLB '54*



*Widener's Loker Reading Room. Thanks to the generosity of Katherine B. Loker LHD 2000, the reading room's original architectural details have been carefully restored. As is the case with the entire Widener restoration, the Loker Room now supports 21st-century technology as well as comfortable places for reading and study.*

*On pages 6 and 7, photos are by Martha Stewart unless otherwise noted.*

# The Mellon Foundation's \$2.1 Million Gift to the Harvard Library Establishes University-Wide Photo Conservation Program

With a \$2.1 million gift from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Harvard University Library (HUL) will establish a comprehensive, University-wide preservation program for Harvard's holdings of more than 7.5 million photographs. The Mellon Foundation is providing a \$1.25 million matching grant to endow the position of senior photograph conservator in HUL's Weissman Preservation Center as well as \$850,000 to help launch the new program during its first six years.

According to Harvard President Lawrence H. Summers, "Harvard's library holdings are among the University's core assets—assets that benefit our own faculty and students as well as scholars around the world. The University's photographic holdings are of tremendous value, providing unparalleled documentation of conditions worldwide, often of a world that is no longer available to us. With new support from the Mellon Foundation, the Harvard libraries will be dynamic stewards of these holdings for the benefit of the world community, now and in the generations to come."

Sidney Verba, Carl H. Pforzheimer University Professor and Director of the University Library, described the Mellon gift to Harvard as an exceptional opportunity. "Because of the Mellon Foundation's vision and generosity, Harvard can create a photograph preservation program that is unique among American universities and that leverages new sources of support. The program will ensure that Harvard's monumental collections of photographs can be made available for widespread use today, and are preserved for future generations." Since 1997, the Mellon Foundation has awarded over \$10 million in support of photograph conservation nationally.

Jan Merrill-Oldham, Malloy-Rabinowitz Preservation Librarian in the University Library and the College Library, directs HUL's Weissman Center. "The camera was used at Harvard almost from the time of its invention to advance science and to document the natural, built, and social environment. For decades, Harvard's photographs have astounded the dedicated scholars who discover and study them," she said. "While historical images often stand alone as records of the past, photographs in the University's repositories are often accompanied by related journals, letters, diaries, and other archival materials that imbue the images with context and meaning. Our new technical and management capabilities will enable us to protect and treat our extraordinary holdings and to make them accessible to a broader audience than ever before."

In 2003, with prior support from the Mellon Foundation, Harvard's Weissman Center completed an assessment of the nature and condition of the University's photograph collections. To view the resulting online "Directory to Photographs at Harvard," visit <http://preserve.harvard.edu/photographs/directory.html>. The directory provides a concise overview of the University's holdings and the 47 repositories in which they are located.

The Weissman Preservation Center was named in March 2000 in honor of Paul M. Weissman '52 and Harriet L. Weissman. The center operates on a collaborative model, in which preservation staff members supported by the University Library and various faculties across the University work together in a shared facility, leveraging their special skills and knowledge to great mutual advantage. Through its special collections conservation laboratory, the center is charged with conserving the University's most rare and valuable holdings. For materials earmarked for digitizing or filming, the center creates high-quality cataloging records and related metadata to ensure that digitized texts can be discovered and used over the very long term. The center provides training, consultations, and other services for preservation and digitization projects across the University.

# 哈佛学院图书馆向中山大学图书馆捐赠藏书 协议签字仪式

The Signing Ceremony of the Agreement Between  
Harvard College Library and Sun Yat-Sen University Library

2004年10月24日



From left to right: Professor Cheng Huan-wen, Director of Sun Yat-Sen University Library; James K. M. Cheng, Librarian of the Harvard-Yenching Library; Professor Huang Daren, President of Sun Yat-Sen University; Nancy M. Cline, Roy E. Larsen Librarian of Harvard College; and Professor Chen Ruzhu, Vice-President of Sun Yat-Sen University

## Harvard College Library Presents Collection to China's Sun Yat-Sen University Library

On October 24, 2004, Nancy M. Cline, Roy E. Larsen Librarian of Harvard College, and Professor Cheng Huan-wen, director of Sun Yat-Sen University Library, Guangzhou, China, signed a formal agreement to transfer a significant selection of Harvard's Hilles Library collection to Sun Yat-Sen University in June 2005. Developed over a century, the collection is composed of titles in the humanities and social sciences, primarily in English, but also in Western foreign languages.

HCL's decision to reconfigure Hilles from a full-service operation to a small reading library came in 2004, largely because the HOLLIS holdings closely replicate those of Lamont Library, which is the University's primary undergraduate library. HCL will retain unique titles and disperse valuable duplicates in the collection to other libraries throughout the University; 28,000 volumes

will stay in Hilles, and the remaining 158,000 volumes, which make up a strong, coherent collection, will go intact to Sun Yat-Sen University Library. Through contact with East Asian librarians at Harvard, the Chinese library early on expressed interest in the collection because of the need to strengthen its holdings in Western-language materials.

Located in southern China, Sun Yat-Sen University, also known as Zhongshan University, is one of the preeminent universities in the country. The Chinese Ministry of Education has designated Sun Yat-Sen University Library as one of seven repositories in the country for documents of higher education.

"In the year marking the 80th anniversary of Sun Yat-Sen University, the Harvard College Library is honored to establish this association with the gift of the Hilles collection. Dr. Sun Yat-Sen authored the University's motto, 'Study extensively; enquire accurately; reflect carefully; discriminate clearly; practice earnestly.' It is in this spirit that we make this gift and welcome a strong relationship between these two libraries and institutions," Cline stated.

# Giving to Harvard Libraries

From John Harvard's founding bequest of 400 books, Harvard University's library collections have grown to include more than 15 million books and journals, as well as millions of other manuscripts, maps, photographs, recordings, and digital objects. The Harvard system of more than 90 individual libraries is one of the world's five greatest libraries—and the most comprehensive academic library in existence.

It is the primary mission of Harvard University's libraries to support teaching, learning, and research throughout the University. Individually, Harvard's libraries respond to the needs of the faculties that support and use them. Simultaneously, Harvard's libraries work collaboratively to build, to preserve, and to house great collections, and to ensure comprehensive access to those collections over time.

The sustained growth and the long-term excellence of Harvard's libraries are dependent on increased levels of support from alumni/ae, friends, corporations, and foundations. Specifically, Harvard seeks to increase funding for the libraries in five crucial areas:

*Preservation and Conservation  
Access and Technology  
Collections  
Positions  
Renovations and Capital Projects*

Donors have the unique opportunity to link gifts to the Harvard libraries with areas of personal interest or intellectual commitment. Whether you give to an individual Harvard library or to the programs that benefit the entire library system, Harvard's library professionals will work closely with you to develop a gift that is meaningful to you and of importance to Harvard and its libraries over time.

## Tax Benefits

Gifts to Harvard's libraries are tax deductible. However, you may receive additional tax benefits by making a gift of securities. For more information, contact the Harvard Management Company at 1.866.845.6596 or [security\\_gifts@hmc.harvard.edu](mailto:security_gifts@hmc.harvard.edu). You may also find information online by visiting <http://www.haa.harvard.edu> and selecting "Give to Harvard, Make a Gift, Stocks."

## Planned Gifts

You may achieve greater tax savings by making a planned gift. To learn more about planned gifts or including Harvard's libraries in your will, contact University Planned Giving at 1.800.446.1277 or <http://www.haa.harvard.edu/pgo>.

## Memorial Gifts

Memorial gifts to the library are a thoughtful way to honor a friend or relative while providing meaningful support to the Library. Please make your check payable to "Harvard University Library," noting the name of the person you wish to honor. If you want us to acknowledge your gift (not the amount) to the honoree's family, please include the appropriate name and address.

## How to Contribute

You may send your gift or pledge commitment to:

*Peggy Davis Molander  
Director of Development  
110 Widener Library  
Harvard University  
Cambridge, MA 02138*

Checks should be payable to "Harvard University Library." For more information, contact Peggy Davis Molander at 617.495.8062 or [molander@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:molander@fas.harvard.edu).

# After Word

Throughout the extensive renovations it has been our intent to prepare Widener for its second century of service to research and teaching. It is now, we believe, a library that welcomes readers and scholars and that accommodates the multi-faceted relationships among the library and the faculty, the departments, the institutes and centers, students, and the ever-changing world of scholarship. What will Widener be like fifty years hence? While no one can foresee the changes that will occur in technology, publishing, networking, teaching, and research, our hope is that Widener will prove as persevering, yet as resilient, as it has in the past. May future generations come through its portals, physical and virtual, with high expectations of the people and resources that reside within, and may they build upon Widener's many relationships with other libraries—within Harvard and around the world.

Nancy M Cline  
Roy E. Larsen Librarian of Harvard College  
from her foreword to  
*Widener: Biography of a Library*  
by Matthew Battles  
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College

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