



Services and Accomplishments in 2010–2011

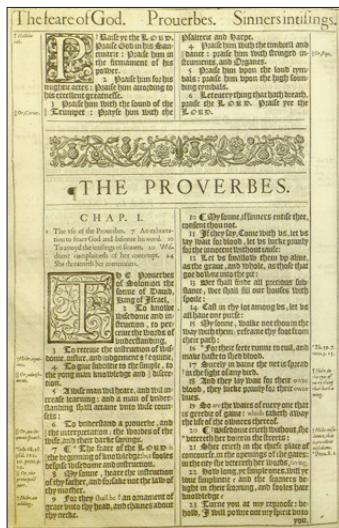


The Center is located in the LEED-certified library administration building at 90 Mount Auburn Street. It is named in honor of Paul M. Weissman '52 and Harriet L. Weissman.

The Weissman Preservation Center specializes in the care and treatment of the rarest of Harvard's library materials. These priceless materials are held in libraries and archives across the University. Throughout each year, the Library calls on the Center's professional staff for preservation outreach, training, and assistance in cases of collection-related emergencies.

The demands of scholarship trigger action in the Weissman Preservation Center. These include research by individual faculty and students, classroom use, digitization efforts, exhibitions, loans to other institutions, and—most critical—identification by curators of priceless materials that may be at great risk.

The Center is named in honor of Paul M. Weissman '52 and Harriet L. Weissman for their visionary support of library preservation at Harvard. With outstanding programs for books, paper, photographs, and, new this year, film, the Weissman Preservation Center has earned recognition as a national and international leader in library preservation.



A page from Houghton Library's first edition of the King James Bible, which was prepared for exhibition by the Weissman Center staff.

Books

At the core of Harvard's library collections are more than 17 million volumes acquired over the course of 375 years. Many thousands of these volumes are unique, while many more are rare.

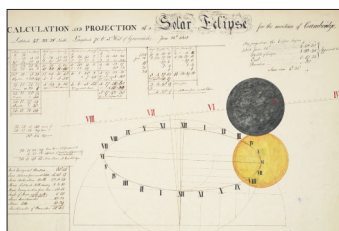
In 2010–2011, Weissman Center conservators treated more than 2,500 rare books from the Harvard collections. For example:

- The 1611 first edition of the King James Bible, prepared for a Houghton Library exhibition entitled *The Bible in Type from Gutenberg to Rogers*.
- John Hancock's "letterbook" of business correspondence covering the years 1762 to 1783. The volume is among the unique holdings on American business in the Baker Library Historical Collections at Harvard Business School.
- A three-volume first edition of Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* and 51 volumes from the Emily Dickinson family library, which are among the holdings of Houghton Library—the University's renowned repository for rare books and manuscripts.

Paper

Paper conservators assessed or treated nearly 10,000 objects in the Weissman Center during 2010–2011. Items, which represent a wide range of formats, sizes, disciplines, and places of origin, include:

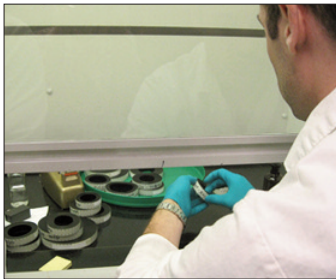
- Many of the 17th- and 18th-century holdings of the Harvard University Archives. With support from Arcadia, these items were treated in preparation for their digitization and subsequent publication in the new online resource *Harvard in the 17th and 18th Centuries*.
- Thousands of drawings by the artist, illustrator, author, and poet Edward Lear (1812–1888), which are held in the Houghton Library.
- Unique costume and set designs from the Harvard Theatre Collection.
- Hundreds of maps, charting urban environments, were treated and assessed for digitization on behalf of the Harvard Map Collection.
- Nearly 1,000 19th- and 20th-century Chinese rubbings made in turn from objects dating from the Qin (221–207 BCE) and Ming (1368–1644 CE) dynasties.



"Solar Eclipse," one of 400 student mathematical theses available online in *Harvard in the 17th and 18th Centuries*, following treatment in the Center's special collections conservation lab.



Morrison's "Qi Hua Men in Winter"—The Harvard-Yenching Library holds 5,000 photographs and 10,000 negatives taken in Beijing by Hedda Hammer Morrison from 1933 to 1946.



Zach Long, a conservation technician at the Weissman Preservation Center, cleans reels of film from the Michael Blackwood Collection.



Natalia Avetyan and Tatiana Sayatina, from Russia's State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, at work in the Weissman Center with Harvard conservators Catherine Badot-Costello and Alan Puglia during their ten-day residency with the Center's renowned photograph preservation program.

Photographs

Photograph conservation is a relatively new discipline, and Harvard's Weissman Center houses one of the few comprehensive photograph preservation programs in the US that embrace conservation treatment, re-housing, and cataloging—often in support of digitization. Founded on generous support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and from Paul and Harriet Weissman, the program provided treatments for more than 1,100 items in the conservation lab in 2010–2011, while an additional 3,300 items were treated on site in repositories across the University. Among the items treated are:

- Personal photo albums belonging to Virginia Woolf and William James.
- 1,551 vintage negatives taken by Hedda Morrison in China, as part of a digitization project to make these images accessible to Internet users worldwide.
- Over 900 panoramas from eight repositories across Harvard, as part of a multi-year initiative to preserve and improve access to this popular, but unwieldy, photographic format.

Film

Film conservators for the Harvard Film Archive joined the staff of the Weissman Preservation Center in 2010–2011. Their first significant project involved examining, stabilizing, re-housing, and cataloging the Michael Blackwood Collection—which includes hundreds of hours of one-of-a-kind outtakes that capture virtually every important painter, sculptor, musician, film director, architect, and choreographer working in the United States during the late 20th century.

"The value of this collection lies in the intimate, backstage perspective it offers on the creative life of some of the most important artistic figures of the 20th century," said Harvard Film Archive Director Haden Guest.

Outreach to Russia's Hermitage: "An Ideal, Comprehensive Model . . ."

In late January, colleagues from the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia, were in residence at the Weissman Preservation Center in conjunction with the American Institute for Conservation and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The Russian conservators and curators studied the preservation and conservation of historic photo albums with their Weissman Center counterparts. Their purpose was twofold: to care for the outstanding collections at the Hermitage and to establish groundwork for the first photograph preservation program in Russia, modeled in large part on the Weissman Center's program.

Paul Messier, co-director for the Hermitage project, described the Weissman Center as "an ideal, comprehensive model for the Hermitage . . . since it's a coordinated, multidisciplinary group of experts all working together for a single mission."

SAVE: An Audiovisual Survey Tool

With support from the Adler Preservation Fund, the Weissman Center has developed a tool for recording the format and condition of Harvard's rare and unique audiovisual collections. These materials, which tend to deteriorate quickly and often depend on obsolete equipment for access, form a vital part of Harvard's library collections. Known as SAVE (for Support for Audiovisual Evaluation at Harvard), the tool, introduced in 2009–2010, has recorded the condition of some 5,500 items. Among the items surveyed in 2010–2011 are recordings from the papers of:

- Dr. Theron Randolph (1906–1995), widely considered to be the father of clinical ecology. (Countway Library of Medicine)
- Dr. Lauriston S. Taylor (1902–2004), who was instrumental in establishing national and international standards for acceptable radiation exposure levels. (Countway Library of Medicine)
- Harvard professor and linguist Karl V. Teeter (1929–2007), known for his research on Algonquian languages, particularly the now-extinct Wiyot language. (Harvard University Archives)