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ABSTRACT

A series of three papers on the Harvard University Archives is presented. The first paper gives the history of the Archives and describes the collections. The second paper deals with the accessioning and preservation of records. The third paper describes the reference service. In each paper the particular description of the Harvard University Archives is given in the context of a wider view of academic archives and resources. (Other papers from this Institute are available as LI 002962-LI 002967 and LI 002969 through LI 002976). (Author)

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[HARVARD UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES]

By
David E. Horn

Papers prepared for the Institute in Archival Librarianship,
University of Oregon, September 22, 1969 - August 14, 1970.

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David L. Torr
November 10, 1960
at London, E.C.

This is the first of a series of papers on the Harvard University Archives. This paper will give an overview of the Archives and describe the collections. The second paper will treat of the accessioning and preservation of records, and the third paper will describe the reference service.

In each paper the particular description of the Harvard University Archives will be given in the context of a wider view of academic archives and resources.

(a. Aspects peculiar to academic archives

Academic archives were generally neglected until twenty or twenty-five years ago. Many institutions of higher learning paid no attention to their archives until they were forced to do so by the pressure of a rapidly increasing volume of non-current records, by the needs of scholars writing centennial histories or other educational works, and by the interest in all records after so many valuable documents had been destroyed in World War II. Thus many colleges came late to the task of establishing a proper archives program (indeed, some have not yet come), but they have been able to implement modern, efficient systems. This is a common occurrence: late-comers benefit from the advances - and mistakes - of fore-runners.¹

The literature on academic archives reflects their recent development. Immediately after World War II there were surveys of colleges and pleas for the establishment of archives; then there were plans and aids for instituting a good program; more recently there have been exchanges from professionals working in established archives in order to solve common problems.

1. Types of material

The proper archives of any institution are all the records generated in the course of its business. Academic records include: 1) records of administrative and department officers, including correspondence files; 2) minutes of meetings of trustees, faculty and committees; 3) samples of both faculty and student notes for every course; 4) examinations; 5) official and student publications; 6) records of student organizations and classes; 7) samples

of discarded texts; 8) pictures of people and places; 9) blueprints of campus buildings.²

One problem is that many different departments have records on the same person. If a request is made for material on, say, Eaphnutius Smith, it might be necessary to look in the files of the registrar, the dean, one or more department heads, various student organizations and the alumni association. Another problem is that the archivist must deal with many different people in his attempts to see that the best records management practices are followed.

2. University relationships

The primary purpose of any archives is to assist in the current operation of the institution by providing needed information from non-current files. A secondary purpose is to preserve material for scholars and to assist people in doing research in those records which may be open. Academic archives have a very high proportion of non-institutional inquiries.³

One of the difficult task of academic archivists has been to convince administrators that their function is necessary, that it is separate from the library and that they must have the authority to supervise the disposition of all records. With the faculty, including the heads of departments, there has always been the problem of convincing the makers of records that all records must be saved, at least until an archivist can evaluate them, that the archives are kept in complete confidence when necessary, and that the papers of all the faculty, that is, their private papers are not only valuable archival material but also deserving of being given intact.

1. Harvard University Archives

Just as Harvard University is, in some respects, an eminent among colleges and universities in the United States, so its Archives are, fortunately, a model of proper organization, institutional usefulness and research availability.⁵

1. History

Harvard College was established in 1636 and in full operation by 1638. Almost from the very beginning the records were kept and handed down from one officer to his successor. The earliest records were kept in a volume known as the "College Book"; in this were written accounts of all the activities of Harvard College, including: minutes of the meetings of the Corporation; minutes of minutes of the Overseers; rules for the conduct of faculty and students. Thus the records are not separated according to the agency that used them but are in one place, generally arranged chronologically but occasionally thrown together with no apparent design. When the first volume was full, it was designated College Book I and entries were made in College Book II. The first four College Books contain the archives of the institution to 1750.

The books were usually kept in the President's House, and it is fortunate that they were there in January, 1764, when a fire destroyed Harvard College (that is, the hall so named) and the library in it. The archives remained in the President's House well into the nineteenth century; they were used and partly re-produced by two historians of Harvard College - Benjamin Pierce in 1833 and Josiah Quincy in 1840. These publications increased interest in the archives, which were gathered by

loose papers, bound together somewhat and, presumably, kept in better conditions. Sometime before the Civil War, probably in 1855 or 1857, the college books and other material important for the history of Harvard University were put in the college library.⁶

Since that time, the archives have been administered by the librarian; this arrangement has continued, even though the university has expanded. The archives are now in the Harvard College Library and regarded as part of that library, which is only one of the many libraries of the University.⁷ For a long time the librarian of Harvard College was ex officio the University Archivist; fortunately, the librarian usually took an interest in the archives or appointed one of his assistants to care for them.

When Justin Winsor was Librarian, he installed William C. Brown as Deputy Keeper. Brown organized the archives and arranged them by means of a system that worked well in his day but could not meet the demands of the rapid expansion of Harvard. Brown finished his work in 1900, but by 1920 another reorganization was under way. This rearrangement was done along the lines of the subject classification common in libraries, but some force or chance (perhaps an instinct, maybe an "Invisible Hand") prevented the irreparable breaking up of the individual files. Thus the material could be arranged according to proper archival principles by C. T. Walton, who served as Assistant Librarian from the late 1920's to the mid-1930's and had studied archival practices in Europe.⁸

In 1938 Clifford K. Shipton was appointed Archivist and the position seems eternally safe from confusion with or fusion with the position of Librarian. His appointment culminated a

years of reform and inaugurated a period of archival expansion that rivaled and even surpassed the expansion of the nineteenth century. Mr. Shipton has been a prominent archivist, not only for Harvard but for all college and university archives work. The descriptions in my next two papers of the accession methods and of the reference service will simply be accounts of the system that he has implemented and perfected during the past thirty years.

2. Materials

The extent of the holdings of the Harvard University Archives is most impressive, as is the growth record during the last hundred years. In 1750, as has been noted, there were four College Books. In 1857 there were twenty volumes; by 1936 there were 16,000 (which indicates that many items had been turned over to the Archives which formerly had been kept in other offices).⁹

By 1957 there was such an increase in the number of volumes that it is probable a different method of counting had been used. Beginning with this year, archives statistics are published in the annual Report of the President of Harvard College and Reports of Its Departments. Some of the more significant items follow:¹⁰

Year of Report	Increase	Present Extent (Volumes and Pamphlets)	Total Budget
1957/8	1,145	46,955	18,000
1963/4	1,216	54,768	33,945
1966/7	1,311	57,794	42,502

In 1947, when there were 51,546 items, they occupied 8,793 feet of shelf space.¹¹ By 1968 the archives occupied 30,000 feet (compared to the 12,00 feet of records at

the situation of some of our best colleges in the United States,¹²

statistics and other statements about the Harvard University archives are not easy to find. The table on the preceding page contains figures drawn from a new and very detailed listing of the acquisitions and expenditures of the Harvard University. The archives receive one line of print in the 20-page report, and that line contains the statistics. Somewhere in any of the reports for the last fifteen years is there any other mention of the archives. Nor is there any mention of the archives in either one of two books on the problems and prospects of the Harvard University Library.¹³ Such neglect seems typical of college reports.

The reason for the neglect of archives in university reports might be the location, administratively, within the library system. Dr. Tolson has pointed out how a system like ours have followed Harvard's example of having the archives in a branch of the library. Archives could be housed in the library building but budgeted with the Publications Office or the Records Office.¹⁴ Then the archives report might be listed separately and contain more information about the growth of each section.

"It is not the mere size of the archives which is impressive, however, but its scope."¹⁵ The records do not begin with the first meeting of the Overseers of Harvard College in 1643, but they do record a meeting on December 10, 1654 and record every meeting since then. The minutes of the meetings of the Overseers begin even earlier, on May 6, 1656, and are

complete from that date until the present. Other than the above period and virtually complete are the correspondence of the Presidents and Secretaries, the minutes and correspondence of various committees, and the Reports of the Disburse Comptroller.

Early in the eighteenth century the Governors, or the Corporation, began to be composed of non-faculty members and the President and Tutors began to meet as the Immediate Government. These weekly meetings began keeping records of their meetings in 1725, and these minutes, perfectly complete, are in the archives. As the government of Harvard became more complex, the records of the Immediate Government included the activities of the Deans and the Standing Committees. Since papers concerning any one student could be found in as many as two dozen different committees and office files, the archivists consolidated many of the files. Dr. Shipton points out that the 4,052 items, mostly boxes, of the records of the Immediate Government are concerned largely with human conduct and are a very helpful source of information for the social historian.¹⁶

The financial records of the University . . . 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 1715.¹⁷

The financial records also include the financial series of the Treasurers Office, begun in 1669. There are many attached dockets, including such sub-series as the account of Treasurer John Hancock. The other items in the strictly archival sections of the University Archives include the more modern records of the administrative work of Harvard, carried on by the various schools, divisions, departments, laboratories, and similar subdivisions. The total of all the strictly archival material is 17,944 items, which occupy a little over a mile of shelf space.

(Figures of 1947) "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."¹⁸

"Any archive will find invaluable a historical collection relating to the parent institution."¹⁹ In addition to the strictly archival material, the University Archives has a collection of 33,702 items, mostly books, which relate to Harvard in one way or another. Though this collection is still increasing, it has decreased in proportion during the last thirty years as more emphasis has been placed on properly archival material. Many items are barely distinguishable from archives, since they are things which have been generated by Harvard in its official business.

Included as Harvardiana are, first, the serial publications of the University, beginning with the first catalogue of graduates in 1674. In 1803 began the publication of the annual catalogue. Other reports are manuscripts of foundation lectures, prize papers (some contests have been going on since 1805) and copies of theses and dissertations for both graduate and undergraduate work.

The University Archives also keep the records of every publication of the Harvard University press, as well as also copies of many publications, from a variety of sources, about Harvard - its history, government, buildings, etc., etc., and the like.²⁰

In the mid-1930's the Archives staff began to gather material related to the Harvard curriculum. They now have an extensive collection which includes material on admission requirements; Commencement and Class Day, during which have been given, year after year for three centuries, speeches on every aspect of human knowledge, some by the invited speakers and some by the graduates; examinations, which were written questions from 1836 on; courses of study, which are recorded in a very complete file of student notes and in a not-so-complete file of teacher notes, and in the complete set of course prospectuses and text books ordered for Harvard students.

Of special interest to the social historian is the collection of material relating to student life. This includes special subject collections, such as student expenses, college fiction, satire, and entertainments. Here, too, are records of sports, student organizations, alumni associations and class societies. The autobiographies in the printed Class reports are unique: in no other place do fifty thousand men at regular intervals report on their lives and state their philosophies. Finally, there are many non-print materials, such as engravings and photographs.²¹

The first volume of the collection is a list of the names of the Harvard graduates who served in the military during the American Revolution. It is a list of names, and it is a list of names.

But, then, it is a collection of names, and it is 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.

1. Several articles in Archives (revived) report on the state of college and university archives in the United States, in Canada, Great Britain and:

John Evelyn Adams, "Archives and records in American universities and colleges," ibid., XII (April, 1950), 277.

John A. Wilson, "Report of the Committee on College and University Archives," ibid., XIII (January, 1951), 63-7.

Wright D. Wilson, "Archives in colleges and universities: some examples of data collected by the Committee on College and University Archives," ibid., XIII (October, 1950), 343-5.

Lawrence A. Weyssay, "An appeal for archives in institutions of higher learning," ibid., XI (July, 1949), 210-220.

Philip S. Lesor, "Colleges and university archives," ibid., XI (January, 1949), 141-5.

Robert A. Largent, "The status of college and university archives," ibid., XIII (July, 1951), 235-7.

2. Wright D. Wilson, "No ivory tower: the administration of a college or university archives," Colleges and Research Libraries, (CHI), XIII (July, 1952), 211-22.

3. Clifford A. Shipcor, "The reference use of archives," University Archives, ed. Holland A. Stevens (Champaign, Illinois: Illinois Union Bookstore, 1963), p. 79.

See also the same writer, "The Harvard University Archives," CHI, III (December, 1941), 55.

4. Thomas LeBuc, "Arcana Siwash: the function and need of a college archives," ibid., I (April, 1943), 132-5.

5. Lawrence A. Weyssay, "A scholar's view of university archives," University Archives, pp. 85, 90.

6. Several articles on the history of the Harvard University Archives have been used. In chronological order they are:

Andrew McFarland Davis, "A few notes concerning the records of Harvard College," No. 27 of Bibliographical Contributions, ed. Justin Winsor (Cambridge: Library of Harvard University), 1892.

_____, "An analysis of the early records of Harvard College, 1736-1750," No. 55 in the same series, 1895.



(note 3, continued.)

Albert Andrews, "Introduction," to Harvard College Record, 69 (1955), 1-15. See also Andrews, "Introduction," Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 19 (1917), 1-15; 20 (1918), 1-15.

Albert Andrews, "Early Harvard records," Harvard Graduate Magazine, 1937 (March, 1937), 337-363.

W. W. Warner, "An historical prospect of Harvard College, 1636-1936," Harvard Magazine, 1936 (March, 1936), 337-363. See also Warner, "The Harvard University Archives: a study of their development and their collection of antiquities," 1930, p. 3.

Clifford A. Chipton, "The collections of the Harvard University Archives," Harvard Library Bulletin (N.S.), 1 (Spring, 1947), p. 176.

4. Clifford A. Chipton, "The Harvard University Archives: goal and function," SLA, 1 (Winter, 1947), 101.

5. Chipton, "Harvard University Archives," ibid., 4.

6. ibid., p. 5.

10. "Report of the President of Harvard College and reports of its departments," Official Register of Harvard University, for the following years: 1957/8, p. 455; 1958/9, p. 367; 1959/60, p. 428. These reports indicate a steady growth of about 1,000 items per year, with an annual increase in the rate of growth of approximately 100 items.

11. Chipton, SLA, 1 (Spring, 1947), 177.

12. Warner, op. cit., p. 257.

13. Place of the Library in a University: a conference held at Harvard University 30-31 March 1949, (Cambridge: Harvard University Library, 1950).

Keyes D. Metcalf, Report on the Harvard University Library: a study of present and prospective problems, (Cambridge: Harvard University Library, 1955).

14. Wood Pulmer and Vernon Carstenson, "University records and their relation to general university administration," SLA, XI (October, 1950), 344.

15. Chipton, ibid.

16. ibid., 177-8. My account is a close paraphrase of this article.

17. ibid., 178.

18. ibid., 179.

The first part of the report is a general
 introduction to the subject of the study.
 The second part is a detailed description
 of the methods used in the study.

UNIVERSITY OF OREGON SCHOOL OF LIBRARIANSHIP

Accessioning
and
Preservation
Of Records

David E. Horn
Archives Seminar
13 November 1969

INTRODUCTION

This is the second of a series of three papers on various aspects of archives, with emphasis on the Archives of Harvard University. One or two points developed in the first paper are mentioned in this one to recall important connections with earlier material.

This is by no means a complete treatise on either accessioning or preservation, nor is it the beginning of such a treatise. It is merely a survey of some important aspects of procedures for handling archival records. I omit material that is given in detail by Schellenberg, for example, the kinds of storage boxes in use, and I also omit certain points that will be covered by other students, for example, microfilming and lamination.

The outline for this paper is similar to the one for the first: under each topic - accessioning and preservation - there are some general remarks and then some particular treatment of the Harvard University Archives. In this paper, because of the nature of the subject, more emphasis is given to general remarks than was given in the preceding paper.

by a vote of the governing body, the Corporation, in 1939. The decree guaranteed the preservation of important records by limiting the right of the individual Departments or Committees to dispose of their records. Every agency may keep records as long as it wants, but no destruction is allowed without the permission of a three-member committee, which includes the Archivist. Once an agency has decided it no longer needs certain records, they may be sent to the Archives, or the Archivist may be asked to inspect them. If he decides the records should be destroyed - and the other committeemen approve - then "future accretions in this particular file (provided that it does not change in character) may be destroyed without further permission."⁵

Once the material is received at the Archives, it is given a call-number; since the call-number is made available to the originating agency, it is relatively easy for them to use the material. Records in the Archives are often restricted in their use because of recentness or for other reasons, but they are always available to the depositors.⁶

PRESERVATION

I. General

The difficulties of preserving materials, and of restoring those materials which have not been well preserved, have plagued both librarians and archivists since the Babylonians struggled with under-baked or over-baked clay tablets thousands of years ago. There will always be old documents either already in the archives or

coming in, but most of the preservation problems facing today's and tomorrow's archivists will be connected with records of recent origin. Therefore most of this brief survey of preservation problems will be concerned with modern records.

The causes of deterioration of documents can be divided into "external" and "internal." External causes are connected with the conditions of storage and use; internal causes are the conditions within the material itself. Both kinds will be treated briefly.

External causes

One of the authorities on the preservation of documents is Adelaide E. Minogue, and most of what follows is based on her writings. If documents are kept at the wrong temperature and humidity, they will become discolored and embrittled; therefore, archives buildings should be air conditioned. Documents might be harmed by mildew, so the air should be circulated freely and there should be air space below the materials and above them.

If documents are subjected to dust, they might be corroded by the acid in the dust or rubbed by the abrasive dust particles; therefore, the dust on incoming documents should be blown off by an air current, and the air in the archives should be filtered; also, no rugs or other textiles that gather dust should be used in the storage area.

Light causes discoloring and fading of documents, which should be stored in a building with few or no windows. Precautions against fire should include an alarm system but not sprinklers (to avoid water damage), and the fire extinguishers available should contain carbon dioxide.

The ancient enemies of records include insects and rodents

which feed on books and manuscripts. Keeping food and trash from the storage area will decrease the danger that these animals will find a way there; incoming materials should be inspected and, if necessary, fumigated.⁸

(The pests that attack documents should not be thought of as unmitigated evils. The recent discovery of the Vinland Map and the Tartar Relation was accomplished partly by the matching of the worm holes on two long-separated items. Here historical research was aided by the way in which the worm turns. Another example is a detective novel by Dorothy Sayers, wherein Lord Peter Wimsey², sleuth and bibliophile, solves a complicated problem by noticing the mildew marks on old books.)

Concerning all causes of deterioration it can be said that a penny of prevention is worth a dollar of cure. When external conditions, because of expense, cannot be made ideal, damage will be kept to a minimum if the documents are made of the best material available. This leads to the next section.

Internal causes

Sometimes, despite the most expensive precautions, records deteriorate rapidly. Obviously, something is wrong with the materials in the document itself or in the ink. Vellum and parchment have been proven very durable, but the items extant today are so old that they must be treated most carefully; special care must include keeping them at the right humidity.⁹

Most records are paper, and the quality of paper varies greatly. Most of the books printed in the first half of the nineteenth century are still in excellent condition, while most of those

printed in the second ^{al} half of that century are in much worse condition. Miss Minogue, like many other writers, blames this on the change from rags to wood pulp in the manufacture of paper, which occurred about 1850. It was thought that the use of inexpensive fibres produced a paper so acidic that it deteriorated rapidly.¹⁰ William J. Barrow proved wrong many of the widely held notions about nineteenth-century paper in a study completed in 1967. He showed that the rag papers made after 1850 deteriorated as rapidly as the pulp papers and sought the common cause. He laid the blame on the use of alum-rosin size to prevent the feathering of ink.¹¹

If ink containing acid is used, there will also be rapid deterioration; the wrong kind of ink can cause encrustation which reduces the folding strength of the paper. Therefore, India ink or ink similarly acid-free should be used.¹²

Recent improvements in the methods for restoring poorly preserved documents seem to have encouraged research for even more efficient means. Especially active in this field has been the Council on Library Resources (CLR) which has sponsored such projects as the following:

The translation from Russian of a book edited by D. M. Flyate, Preservation of Documents and Papers, a collection of papers on a variety of problems. The chapters deal with the aging of papers, the treatment of mold-infected papers with ultra-sonic vibrations, the development of long-fibred paper, new methods of color photography, stain removals, and the conditions of the storage of documents in archives.¹³

A grant of \$75,000 to the Imperial College of Science and Technology, London, for a three-year study "on the scientific

aspects of the conservation of library materials," a project resulting from that College's involvement in the restoration work undertaken after the Florence flood of 1966.¹⁴

A grant of \$1,000 to the Society of American Archivists to help publish "a volume of professional papers on archives and records centers buildings and equipment."¹⁵

The Council on Library Resources is not the only institution interested in this work. The Library Technology Program of the American Library Association and the William J. Barrow Research Laboratory also do research, sometimes in cooperation with the CLR.¹⁶

II. Harvard University Archives

The ancientness of the Harvard Archives indicates that they contain manuscripts that must be in poor condition, and the history of the Archives given in the first of my papers showed that their documents had not ^{ays} always been well cared for. Nevertheless, none of the writings about the Archives refer to any special problems in preservation or restoration, except the fairly common problem of using the best possible paper for theses.

For many years the Harvard Archivist has been looking for a satisfactory paper for the copies of each thesis that will be kept permanently. One mistake that was made was the acceptance of various kinds of electro-print copies, many of which cannot be properly microfilmed. The Archivist agreed to a proposal by the Crane Paper Company of Dalton, Massachusetts, to make a standard thesis paper. When the sample was tested, however, it proved to be highly acidic. The company suggested that too much was being made of acidity, but they agreed to try again. This time they

produced a paper that was actually alkaline and also had excellent folding strength. This paper, labeled Crane's Thesis Paper, has solved the problem for theses, but the various departments of the University still use inferior paper, especially for the carbon copy of important correspondence. ~~to~~^{to} 17

Studies like this can affect decisions in the lives of many individuals. I have long felt delinquent in my duty to posterity because I do not keep a diary or write many letters. Now I resolve not only that I shall be a diarist and letter-writer, but also that I shall use only acid-free paper!

NOTES

Only brief references are given here. Full bibliographic details will be found in the bibliography on the following pages.

1. The use of accessioning or acquiring to mean appraising can be seen in the articles by Barrett, Buck, Gingerich and Munby.

2. Schellenberg, Modern Archives, p. 118, and Management of Archives, pp 200-1.

3. Buck, pp 265-6.

4. Gingerich, pp 515-6.

5. Harvard University Archives, pp 3 and 1-2.

6. Ibid., p 4.

7. Schellenberg, Modern Archives, p 161.

8. Minogue, "Physical Care," pp 5-8.

9. Minogue, "Repair and Preservation," p 46.

10. Minogue, "Some observations," pp 115-6.

11. Barrow, William J., Strength and Other Characteristics of Book Papers, 1800-1899 (Richmond: W.J. Barrow Research Laboratory, 1967). Reported in Recent Developments, No. 261, Feb. 14, 1968, pp 1-2.

12. Ibid., p 3.

13. Recent Developments, # 260, pp 1-2.

14. Recent Developments, # 271, p 1.

15. Recent Developments, # 250, p 1.

16. Recent Developments, # 254, p 1.

17. Shipton, "Reference us of archives," pp 78-9.

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UNIVERSITY OF OREGON SCHOOL OF LIBRARIANSHIP

Harvard University Archives: Reference Service

David E. Horn

Seminar - Archives

28 October 1969

INTRODUCTION

This is the last of a series of three papers on the Harvard University Archives. This paper describes the reference service at Harvard in some detail and includes a brief discussion of the relationship between the archivist and the researcher.

Archives exist to be used. There are two kinds of use = official and unofficial; no attempt is made in this paper to say definitively which use is more important.

Aspects peculiar to academic archives

The archives of colleges and universities share most of the problems and procedures of other archives in their reference service. These general aspects of the subject are dealt with in standard sources, but there are some problems that are found exclusively in academic archives. One of the most obvious of these is the use of theses and dissertations. Such papers are handled differently in different institutions, so it is impossible to generalize. Details of the practices of Harvard will be given below.

Another unique aspect of academic archives might be the ratio of administrative to outside users. Most people seem to think of college archives as collections of historical material rather than service departments for records management; consequently, most users of the archives are not officers of the institution.

Harvard University Archives

Service to departments of Harvard University: like other archives, the archives of Harvard were established as a separate department (administratively within the library) ostensibly to handle the non-current records of all the departments and agencies of Harvard University. Thus the justification for the existence of the archives, and their insurance of a sufficient appropriation, is the service they render to the officers of their institution.¹

The most frequent use made by Harvard departments is the inquiry by some department or office into its own past records.

Such records are always available to the depositor, who can either telephone the archivist, send someone to see the record or request the loan of some part of the material.² Clifford K. Shipton, the recently retired Custodian of the Harvard University Archives, clearly regarded this records management service as an excuse to have in existence an agency that could gather and make available documents of lasting interest. An additional advantage of the system is that it allows the archivist to examine all records that are suggested for destruction and to save those that will be historically important.³

The use of non-current records is especially important for new administrative officers. Since they need detailed knowledge of the actions of their predecessors and the reasons for those actions, the archivist provides to them the very limited access that preserves the necessary secrecy. One frequently consulted group is the committee records, which are used by the university lawyers for suits involving property. The recurrence of such inquiries has led to the development of a file of the most needed information, which can be given to the lawyers very quickly.⁴

Some of the services given the administration are not, strictly speaking, archival, but it is easier to render the service than to explain that it is not the province of the archivist. Once, for example, the Buildings and Grounds department asked if a well drilled in a particular place would hit water. Rather than protest the question, Dr. Shipton found an old map of Cambridge that indicated there was once a pond on the site in question. The well was dug and water was found.⁵

Dr. Shipton summarizes service to the administration:

Considering the whole picture of the use of the Harvard Archives by administrative offices, it is obvious that the greatest number of reference services is in relation to such uninspiring things as cancelled checks. The use of their really archival material in our custody is relatively rare, except for the minutes of the Corporation. These are so active that the keeping of the index up-to-date is a matter of significance. Beyond this, research by the administrative officers is most frequently to determine the precise terms of former gifts. There is relatively little use of departmental correspondence except by the museums, which seem to be constantly losing objects.

Service to outside users: most of the use of the Harvard Archives is by people who are not officers of Harvard. There are different kinds of users; I shall consider first the scholar who comes to the archives to do research on a particular subject.

The visiting scholar will find that both the archival and the historical material on the subject or individual he is studying is filed in one card catalog. In one place he will find, for example, references to books and articles by and about Mr. X and to theses and prize papers he wrote at Harvard. The scholar will find detailed references to material in the Corporation Records, Faculty Records, Alumni Records, etc.

Access to these sources is a problem. The historical or library material is brought without hesitation, and most of the Harvard records before 1909 may be obtained as easily. Later records, however, and certain rare documents are made available only after a careful inquiry as to the purpose of the scholar.⁷

Sometimes an inquirer receives no service at all from the archives. If, in the opinion of the archivist, the requested files do not contain the material the scholar says he is looking for or contains so little that the wear and tear on the records

would not be justified, then the inquirer is turned away. In such a case the opinion of Dr. Shipton and the official policy of the Harvard Corporation are in complete agreement.⁸

The extent to which the archives staff can aid the scholar is a matter of available time and established priorities. Most archivists probably enjoy this type of work - Dr. Shipton certainly does - and they can justify their activities as aids to good public relations. Furthermore, the tradition of the university as a source of information makes the availability of reference service part of the justification for the archives.

The policy of the Harvard Archives has been to make their services available only to competent scholars and to provide these elite with maximum assistance. The Custodian has regarded it as his duty to advise an inquirer to abandon a certain study if there is not enough material or to limit his topic if there is an over-abundance. Dr. Shipton admits to feeling guilty about some of the thesis direction he has given to outsiders on his employers' time, but he obviously thinks this has been one of the most rewarding uses of the archives.⁹

Such views on the helpfulness of archivists would certainly be approved by scholars like Philip D. Jordan, who thinks that ". . . the finest resource is not the documents themselves but the degree of interest and cooperation manifested by the archivists." He wants the archivist to realize that a scholar is often trying to investigate a certain subject, that he does not go to the archives to view any particular document or file but to survey all pertinent material. Thus he wants hints and

clues from the custodians.¹⁰

The view that an archivist should direct a scholar to all possibly helpful information is shared by Wyman W. Parker, who is a librarian rather than a scholar. He emphasizes the necessity of a well arranged archives and adds, "There is an obligation to inform scholars known to be working on a special subject that one's collection contains important relevant information." Archivists should even refer people to other collections.¹¹

The above exponents of ideal archival practices refer to some of their less happy experiences. An overview of several university archives was obtained by Lawrence R. Vesey, who also says that scholars want to find an efficient organization but want even more to receive sympathetic understanding. His description of a typical visit by a travelling, not very affluent researcher should remind archivists of the problems often encountered by scholars.¹²

The above digression on the problem of the relationship between the archivist and the scholar should help show some of the typical problems and the solutions usually applied by the Harvard Archives staff. Of course, scholars doing extensive research are by no means the only outside users of the archives.

Many questions come from the general public, either sent directly to the archivist or referred to him by one of the officers of the university. The first recorded inquiry to the Harvard Archives was in 1747, and it was not answered.

A Massachusetts town asked for a transcript of the record of a gentleman whom they were considering hiring as their minister, even though he had recently been expelled from the University. The Faculty refused to send the transcript, as it considered the material to be for the use of Harvard officials only.¹³

Today inquiries to the archives are usually of a less personal nature and are usually answered. No student folders are ever allowed to be used in the reading room, however; a request from, for example, the FBI is answered by one of the staff who looks into the folder to find the requested information. If there is any doubt as to the propriety of answering the question, then the matter is referred to the department which originally made the record.¹⁴

Most of the troublesome requests concern doctoral dissertations. These are official records of Harvard, since they are required for degrees, but they are not all equally accessible. Many of the writers request that their dissertations be withheld from any use; this is particularly true of scholars whose work is only a bibliographic survey of a field in which they expect to work for many years. Therefore, many departments request that the dissertations be kept out of use for five years. Even this period of time is not sufficient for papers on such delicate subjects as still living public figures or modern sociological surveys, and the archivist must use his judgment.¹⁵

Much time is spent answering the inquiries by mail from the general public. Many people regard such public figures as

the President of Harvard as a source of information on American history and current events. Much time is saved by referring all such questions to one office, and the archives have accepted the responsibility, which is made easier by their proximity to the library. So many of the questions recur that the staff have compiled an index of answers to standard questions.

The most frequently asked question is, "Did my grandfather go to Harvard?" Other requests for information about relatives lead to proof of citizenship or exact details about the lives of people who have attended Harvard. Many details of the history of Harvard are requested and usually supplied. Some of the requests for other historical information are answered for the sake of good public relations and because it is easier to answer the questions than to explain that it is not the proper function of an archives to do so. ¹⁶

In 1964 the Harvard University Archives made a survey of the use of their records during an eighteen-month period, when there were approximately one hundred and fifty people who came to their reading room to do research, not the quick reference work, but the extended study that required the approval of the archivist. I shall list the results of this survey as follows: the subjects studied, beginning with the subject studied most frequently; after each subject is a list of the kinds of records those scholars requested, in the order of their most frequent use.

BIOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH (a little more than 30% of the users worked in this field): official records; personal papers;

special collection of biographies of Harvard graduates.

HISTORY OF EDUCATION (30%): official records; private manuscripts; curriculum material.

HISTORY OF SCIENCE (10%): private papers of early scientists; official records; curriculum collection; prize papers; library shelf lists; charging lists.

HISTORY OF LITERATURE (5%): curriculum collection; lists of commencement topics; charging lists.

HISTORY OF MEDICINE (5%): official records; health records; class records.

PHILOSOPHY (5%): curriculum collection; private manuscripts; biography collection; student life collection (which shows what students were reading and discussing).

HISTORY OF RELIGION (5%): official records; curriculum records; club records.

LOCAL HISTORY (2%): private papers.

ARCHITECTURE (2%): private papers; official records; historical collection.

ECONOMICS (2%): private papers; official records.

LIBRARY HISTORY (2%): private papers; official records.

ANTHROPOLOGY (2%): private papers; official records; curriculum collection.

GENEOLOGY AND FAMILY CURIOSITY (2%): official records; curriculum collection; class records.

POLITICAL HISTORY (trace): private papers, especially the Eliot and Lowell manuscripts.¹⁷

Conclusion

In this paper I have described the reference^{service} of the Harvard University Archives. The use of the archives of any institution by the officers of that institution in order to conduct their necessary business is the primary reason for establishing the archives and for deciding that any particular document will be put into the archives. While the documents are there, awaiting such official use, they are sometimes available to other departments of the same institution or even to outsiders. This unofficial use is so important that often the primary reason for retaining documents beyond the time of any possible official use is their value as history. The archives of Harvard show this very clearly.

Although an archivist must bear the dual burdens of records manager and preserver of historical documents, he can experience the "two joys in the life of an archivist. The first is the bringing order out of chaos. After that, except for making decisions as to preservation, the work of the archivist would be dull routine were it not for the function of finding the answers to the amazing questions asked sometimes by our administrators, but usually by the public." 18

NOTES

Only brief references are given here. Full bibliographic details will be found in the bibliography on the following pages.

1. Shipton, "College archives," 395-6.
2. Harvard University Archives, 4-5.
3. Shipton, "Reference use," 68-9.
4. Ibid., 72.
5. Ibid., 72-3.
6. Ibid., 73.
7. Ibid., 70-1.
8. Shipton, "College archives," 395-6.
9. Shipton, "Reference use," 75.
10. Jordan, 59.
11. Parker, 239, 240.
12. Veysey, 90-3.
13. Shipton, "Reference use," 73-4.
14. Ibid., 70.
15. Ibid., 75-6.
16. Ibid., 78-9.
17. Shipton, "College archives," 397-400.
18. Shipton, "Reference use," 80-1.

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UNIVERSITY OF OREGON SCHOOL OF LIBRARIANSHIP

Harvard University Archives: Resources

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Seminar - Archives

28 October 1969

PREFACE

This is the first of a series of three papers on the Harvard University Archives. This paper will tell of the history of the Archives and describe the collections. The second paper will treat of the accessioning and preservation of records; and the third paper will describe the reference service.

In each paper the particular description of the Harvard University Archives will be given in the context of a wider view of academic archives and resources.

A. Aspects peculiar to academic archives

Academic archives were generally neglected until twenty or twenty-five years ago. Many institutions of higher learning paid no attention to their archives until they were forced to do so by the pressure of a rapidly increasing volume of non-current records, by the needs of scholars writing centennial histories or other educational works, and by the interest in all records after so many valuable documents had been destroyed in World War II. Thus many colleges came late to the task of establishing a proper archives program (indeed, some have not yet come), but they have been able to implement modern, efficient systems. This is a common occurrence: late-comers benefit from the advances - and mistakes - of fore-runners.¹

The literature on academic archives reflects their recent development. Immediately after World War II there were surveys of colleges and pleas for the establishment of archives; then there were plans and aids for instituting a good program; more recently there have been exchanges from professionals working in established archives in order to solve common problems.

1. Types of material

The proper archives of any institution are all the records generated in the course of its business. Academic records include: 1) records of administrative and department officers, including correspondence files; 2) minutes of meetings of trustees, faculty and committees; 3) samples of both faculty and student notes for every course; 4) examinations; 5) official and student publications; 6) records of student organizations and classes; 7) samples

of discarded texts; 8) pictures of people and places; 9) blue-prints of campus buildings.²

One problem is that many different departments have records on the same person. If a request is made for material on, say, Paphnutius Smith, it might be necessary to look in the files of the registrar, the dean, one or more department heads, various student organizations and the alumni association. Another problem is that the archivist must deal with many different people in his attempts to see that the best records management practices are followed. C

2. University relationships

The primary purpose of any archives is to assist in the current operation of the institution by providing needed information from non-current files. A secondary purpose is to preserve material for scholars and to assist people in doing research in those records which may be open. Academic archives have a very high proportion of non-institutional inquiries.³

One of the difficult tasks of academic archivists has been to convince administrators that their function is necessary, that it is separate from the library and that they must have the authority to supervise the disposition of all records. With the faculty, including the heads of departments, there has always been the problem of convincing the makers of records that all records must be saved, at least until an archivist can evaluate them, that the archives are kept in complete confidence when necessary, and that the papers of all the faculty, that is, their private papers are not only valuable archival material but also deserving of being given intact. d.

B. Harvard University Archives

Just as Harvard University is, in some respects, pre-eminent among colleges and universities in the United States, so its Archives are, fortunately, a model of proper organization, institutional usefulness and research availability.⁵

1. History

Harvard College was established in 1636 and in full operation by 1638. Almost from the very beginning the records were kept and handed down from one officer to his successor. The earliest records were kept in a volume known as the "College Book"; in this were written accounts of all the activities of Harvard College, including: minutes of the meetings of the Corporation; minutes of minutes of the Overseers; rules for the conduct of faculty and students. Thus the records are not separated according to the agency that used them but are in one place, generally arranged chronologically but occasionally thrown together with no apparent design. When the first volume was full, it was designated College Book I and entries were made in College Book II. The first four College Books contain the archives of the institution to 1750.

The books were usually kept in the President's House, and it is fortunate that they were there in January, 1764, when a fire destroyed Harvard College (that is, the hall so named) and the library in it. The archives remained in the President's House well into the nineteenth century; they were used and partly re-produced by two historians of Harvard College - Benjamin Pierce in 1833 and Josiah Quincy in 1840. These publications increased interest in the archives, which were gathered by

Jared Sparks, bound together somewhat and, presumably, kept in better conditions. Sometime before the Civil War, probably in 1856 or 1857, the College Books and other material important for the history of Harvard University were put in the college library.⁶

Since that time, the archives have been administered by the librarian; this arrangement has continued, even though the university has expanded. The archives are now in the Harvard College Library and regarded as part of that library, which is only one of the many libraries of the University.⁷ For a long time the Librarian of Harvard College was ex officio the University Archivist; fortunately, the librarian usually took an interest in the archives, or appointed one of his assistants to care for them.

When Justin Winsor was Librarian, he installed William G. Brown as Deputy Keeper. Brown organized the archives and arranged them by means of a system that worked well in his day but could not meet the demands of the rapid expansion of Harvard. Brown finished his work in 1900, but by 1920 another reorganization was under way. This rearrangement was done along the lines of the subject classification common in libraries, but some force or chance (perhaps an instinct, maybe an "Invisible Hand") prevented the irreparable breaking up of the individual files. Thus the material could be arranged according to proper archival principles by C. E. Walton, who served as Assistant Librarian from the late 1920's to the mid-1930's and had studied archival practices in Europe.⁸

In 1938 Clifford K. Shipton was appointed Archivist and the position seems eternally safe from confusion with or fusion ^{e.} with the position of Librarian. His appointment culminated a

decade of reform and inaugurated a period of archival expansion that rivaled and even surpassed the expansion of the University. Dr. Shipton has been a prominent archivist, not only for Harvard but for all college and university archives work. The descriptions in my next two papers of the accession methods and of the reference service will simply be accounts of the system that he has implemented and perfected during the past thirty years.

2. Materials

The extent of the holdings of the Harvard University Archives is most impressive, as is the growth record during the last hundred years. In 1750, as has been noted, there were four College Books. In 1857 there were twenty volumes; by 1936 there were 16,000 (which indicates that many items had been turned over to the Archives which formerly had been kept in other offices).⁹

By 1957 there was such an increase in the number of volumes that it is probable a different method of counting had been used. Beginning with this year, archives statistics are published in the annual Report of the President of Harvard College and Reports of Its Departments. Some of the more significant items follow:¹⁰

Year of Report	Increase	Present Extent (Volumes and Pamphlets)	Total Budget
1957/8	1,145	46,955	\$ 18,003
1963/4	1,216	54,768	33,945
1966/7	1,311	57,794	42,502

In 1947, when there were 51,546 items, they occupied 8,793 feet of shelf space.¹¹ By 1968 the archives occupied 30,000 feet (compared to the 12,00 feet of records at

the University of Pennsylvania, which has the second largest college archives in the United States).¹²

Statistics and other statements about the Harvard University Archives are not easy to find. The table on the preceding page contains figures drawn from a new and very detailed listing of the activities and expenditures of the libraries of Harvard. The archives receive one line of print in the 20-page report, and that line contains the statistics. Nowhere in any of the reports for the last fifteen years is there any other mention of the archives. Nor is there any mention of the archives in either one of two books on the problems and prospects of the Harvard University Library.¹³ Such neglect seems typical of college reports.

One reason for the neglect of archives in university reports might be the location, administratively, within the library system. Dr. Shipton has pointed out that very few colleges have followed Harvard's example of having the archives run as a branch of the library. Archives could be housed in the library building but budgeted with the Publications Office or Alumni Records Office.¹⁴ Then the archives report might be issued separately and contain more information about the growth of each section.

"It is not the mere size of the Archives which is impressive, however, but its scope."¹⁵ The records do not begin with the first meeting of the Governors of Harvard College in 1643, but they do record a meeting on December 10, 1654 and record every meeting since then. The minutes of the meetings of the Overseers begin even earlier, on May 6, 1650, and are

complete from that date until the present. Dating from the same period and virtually complete are the correspondence of the Presidents and Secretaries, the minutes and correspondence of various committees, and the Reports of the Visiting Committees.

Early in the eighteenth century the Governors, or the Corporation, began to be composed of non-faculty members, so the President and Tutors began to meet as the Immediate Government. These Faculty meetings began keeping records of their meetings in 1725, and these minutes, perfectly complete, are in the Archives. As the government of Harvard became more complex, the records of the Immediate Government included the activities of the Deans and the Standing Committees. Since papers concerning any one student could be found in as many as two dozen different committee and office files, the archivists consolidated many of the files. Dr. Shipton points out that the 4,052 items, mostly boxes, of the records of the Immediate Government are concerned largely with human conduct and are a very helpful source of information for the social historian.¹⁶

The financial records of the University . . . 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 1715.¹⁷

The financial records also include the journal series of the Treasurer's Office, begun in 1669. There are many attached dockets, including such sub-series as the papers of Treasurer John Hancock. The other items in the strictly Archival sections of the University Archives include the more modern records of the administrative work of Harvard, carried on by the graduate schools, divisions, departments, laboratories, and similar subdivisions. The total of all the strictly archival material is 17,844 items, which occupy a little over a mile of shelf space.

(Figures of 1947) "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."¹⁸

"Any archive will find invaluable a historical collection relating to the parent institution."¹⁹ In addition to the strictly archival material, the University Archives has a collection of 33,702 items, mostly books, which relate to Harvard in one way or another. Though this collection is still increasing, it has decreased in proportion during the last thirty years as more emphasis has been placed on properly archival material. Many items are barely distinguishable from archives, since they are things which have been generated by Harvard in its official business.

Included as Harvardiana are, first, the serial publications of the University, beginning with the first catalogue of graduates in 1674. In 1803 began the publication of the annual catalogue. Other reports are manuscripts of foundation lectures, prize papers (some contests have been going on since 1808) and copies of theses and dissertations for both graduate and undergraduate work.

The University Archives also keep the 'record file' of every publication of the Harvard University Press. There are also copies of many publications, from a variety of sources, about Harvard - its history, government, buildings, bequests, and the like.²⁰

In the mid-1930's the Archives staff began to gather material related to the Harvard curriculum. They now have an extensive collection which includes material on: admission requirements; Commencement and Class Day, during which were given, year after year for three centuries, speeches on every aspect of human knowledge, some by the invited speakers and some by the graduates; examinations, which were written questions from 1836 on; courses of study, which are recorded in a very complete file of student notes and in a not-so-complete file of teacher notes, and in the complete set of course prospectuses and text books ordered for Harvard students.

Of special interest to the social historian is the collection of material relating to student life. This includes special subject collections, such as student expenses, college fiction, satire, and entertainments. Here, too, are accounts of sports, student organizations, alumni associations and class societies. The autobiographies in the printed Class reports are unique: in no other place do fifty thousand men at regular intervals report on their lives and state their philosophies. Finally, there are many non-print materials, such as engravings and photographs.²¹

No more accurate and eloquent summary of the value of the Harvard University Archives could be given than that by Clifford K. Shipton:

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.²²

NOTES

1. Several articles in American Archives (AA) report on the state of college and university archives in the United States. In chronological order they are:

John Melville Jennings, " Archival activity in American universities and colleges," AA, XII (April, 1949), 155.

Dwight D. Wilson, "Report of the Committee on College and University Archives," AA, XIII (January, 1950), 63-4.

Dwight D. Wilson, " Archives in colleges and universities: some comments on data collected by the Society's Committee on College and University Archives," AA, XIII (October, 1950), 343-5.

Henry J. Browne, "An appeal for archives in institutions of higher learning," AA, XVI (July, 1953), 213-226.

Philip P. Mason, "College and university archives," AA, XXVI (January, 1963), 161-5.

Robert M. Warner, " The Status of College and university archives," AA, XXXI (July, 1968), 235-7.

2. Dwight H. Wilson, "No Ivory Tower: the administration of a college or university archives," College and Research Libraries, (CRL), XIII (July, 1952), 215-22.

3. Clifford K. Shipton, "The reference use of archives," University Archives, ed. Rolland E. Stevens (Champaign, Illinois: Illini Union Bookstore, 1965), p. 73.

See also the same writer, "The Harvard University Archives," CRL, III (December, 1941), 55.

4. Thomas LeDuc, "Arcana Siwash: the function and need of a college archives," AA, IX (April, 1946), 132-5.

5. Lawrence R. Veysey, "A scholar's view of university archives," University Archives, pp. 85, 90.

6. Several articles on the history of the Harvard University Archives have been used. In chronological order they are:

Andrew McFarland Davis, " A few notes concerning the records of Harvard College," No. 27 of Bibliographical Contributions, ed. Justin Winsor (Cambridge: Library of Harvard University), 1888.

_____, "An analysis of the early records of Harvard College, 1636-1750," No. 50 in the same series, 1895.

(note 6, continued)

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7. Clifford K. Shipton, "The Harvard University Archives: goal and function," HLB, I (Winter, 1947), 101.

8. Shipton, "Harvard University Archives," CRL, 54.

9. Walton, p. 5.

10. "Report of the President of Harvard College and reports of its departments," Official Register of Harvard University, for the following years: 1957/8, p. 455; 1963/4, p. 367; 1966/7, p. 428. These reports indicate a steady growth of about 1,000 items per year, with an annual increase in the rate of growth of approximately 100 items.

11. Shipton, HLB, I (Spring, 1947), 177.

12. Warner, op. cit., p. 237.

13. Place of the Library in a University: a conference held at Harvard University 30-31 March 1949, (Cambridge: Harvard University Library, 1950).

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14. Mood Fulmer and Vernon Carstenson, "University records and their relation to general university administration," CRL, XI (October, 1950), 344.

15. Shipton, ibid.

16. Ibid., 177-8. My account is a close paraphrase of this article.

17. Ibid., 178.

18. Ibid., 179.

19. Shipton, HLB, I (Winter, 1947), 107.
20. Shipton, HLB, I (Spring, 1947), 179-80.
21. Ibid., 182-4.
22. Ibid., 184.

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