

Stories from the Harvard University Libraries, told in photographs and text, featuring:

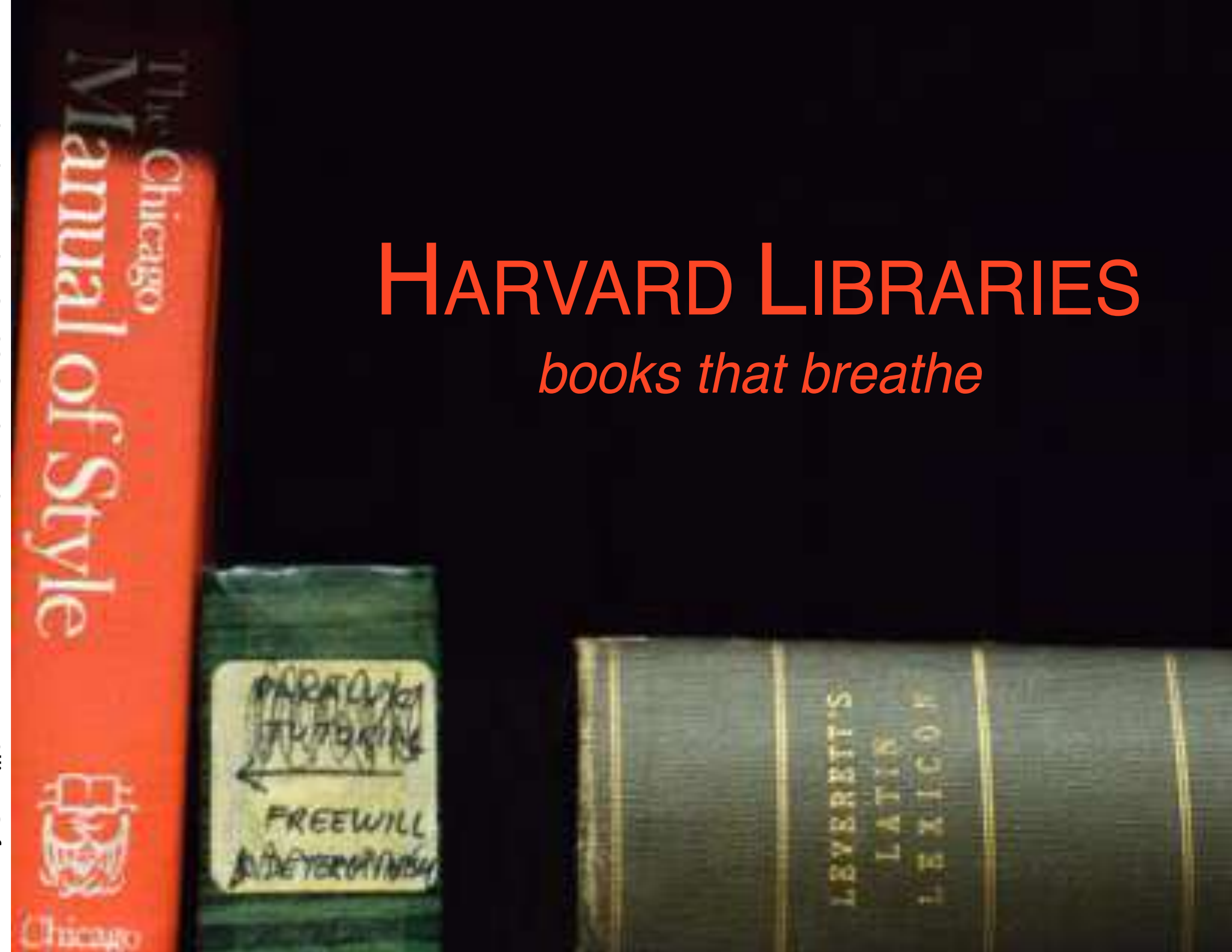
- Harry Elkins Widener Memorial Library
- Lamont Library
- Houghton Library
- Robbins Library of Philosophy
- Cabot Science Library

HARVARD LIBRARIES

books that breathe

HARVARD LIBRARIES: BOOKS THAT BREATHE

Allison Goffman

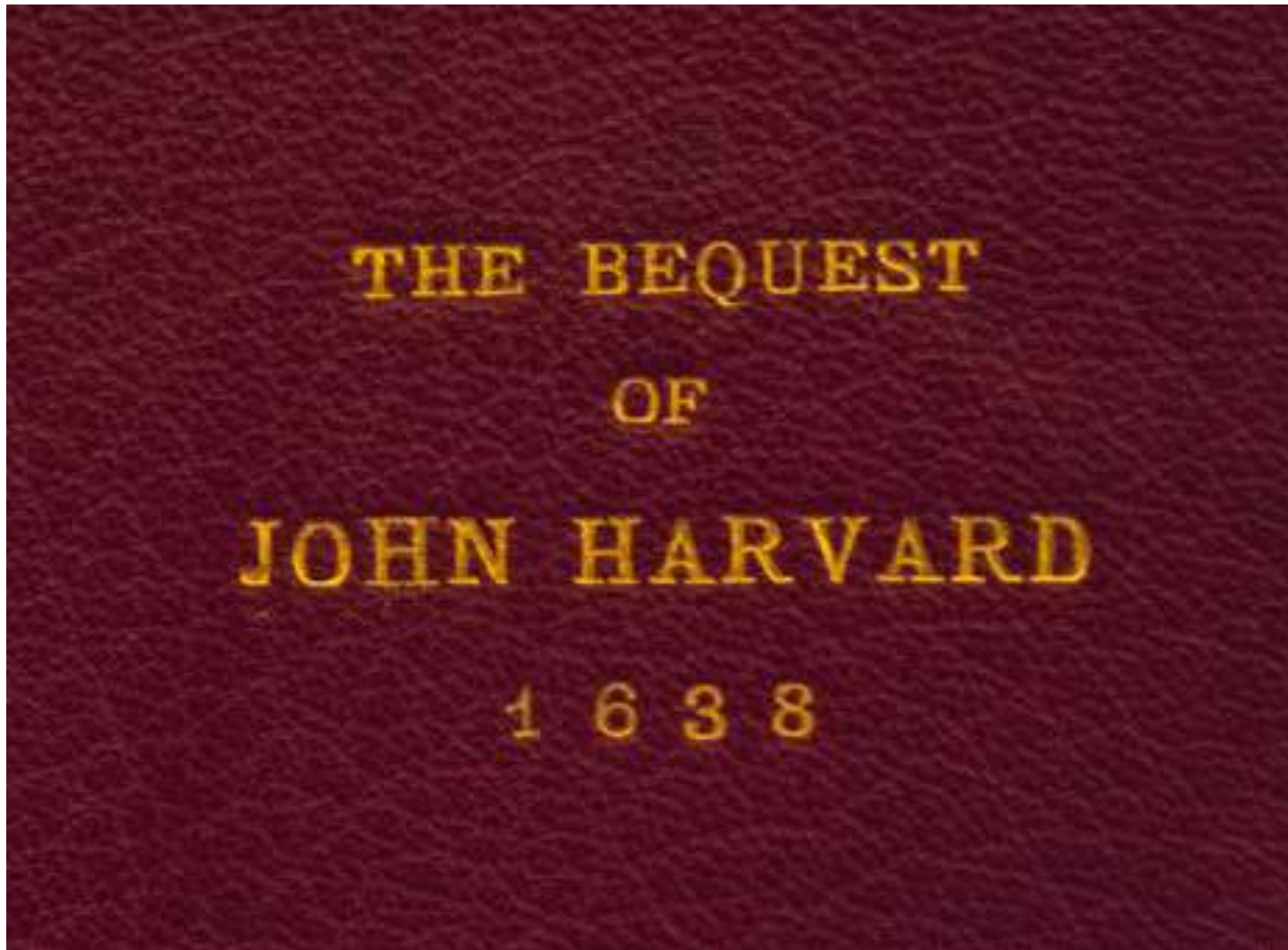


HARVARD LIBRARIES

books that breathe

Allison Gofman





The embossed cover of the only surviving book from John Harvard's original gift, the fourth edition of *The Christian Warfare Against the Devil World and Flesh* by John Downname, published in 1634. It is currently stored in Houghton Library. All of the other donated books were destroyed on January 24, 1764 when the original Harvard Hall burned to the ground.

Welcome to the Library

Founded with John Harvard's original gift of approximately 300 books in 400 volumes to the fledgling "schoale or colledge" in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, today's Harvard University Library System is comprised of 79 libraries with over 17 million volumes. It is the oldest library system in the United States, the largest academic library in the world, and the largest private library system in the world.

John Harvard's bequest was primarily theological; three-quarters of the books were biblical commentary and sermons. Much of the rest was composed of the classics in English translation: Homer, Pliny, and Plutarch. There were grammar books and dictionaries in Greek, Hebrew, and English; a half-dozen quote books (most likely from John Harvard's primary school days); only four books on English literature and history; and a small assortment on science, philosophy, medicine, logic, and law.

Today's libraries have a very different focus. The bulk of the collection is a part of the Harvard College Library, which includes 11 million items in collections in the film, fine arts, government documents, humanities, maps, rare books and manuscripts, sciences, social sciences, and theatre, with materials in over 100 languages. Other libraries in the larger University system include collections in business, law, medicine, theology, and women's history, among others.

This book is a visual exploration of the libraries as physical spaces: not only as beautiful architecture or as a collection of books, but as a unique intersection of the two. The physical spaces exist in dialogue with their content. Just as the environment in which one finds or reads a book can frame one's understanding of the content, the books as physical items and repositories of information influence a library visitor's understanding of the architecture.

What is a Library?

The term library comes to the English Language via French *librarie*, from the Latin *liber*, book. It stems from *libr-*, *liber*, meaning inner bark, rind, and book. While the first use of the term in English did not come until the 14th century, the first libraries were developed nearly simultaneously with written language. The earliest libraries currently identified were archives of cuneiform tablets in Sumer, dating as early as 2600 BCE. The collection primarily consisted of commercial records and inventory.

In many other languages, however, the term for library comes from the Latin and Greek roots *Bibliotheca* and *Bibliothēkē* (Greek: βιβλιοθήκη), meaning bookcase. The French *bibliothèque*, Spanish *biblioteca*, and Russian *biblioteka* (библиотека) all come from the root word meaning 'bookcase', a storage system for books.



Libre: Book

The functional purpose of a library is to create an organized collection of information that is accessible to some community for use by reference or borrowing.

The Harvard College Library's mission statement includes the following goals:

The Harvard College Library supports the teaching and research activities of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and the University. Beyond this primary responsibility, the Library serves, to the extent feasible, the larger scholarly community.

The Library acquires, organizes, preserves, and makes readily available collections of scholarly materials in all media and formats.

As of 2010, the Library holds 16.8 million volumes, 15.8 million digital files, 100,000 serial titles, 8 million photographs, and an estimated 400 million manuscript items.



A flag marks the location where a book has been removed from the display cases in the Edison and Newman Room of Houghton Library for use by a patron. All books in the collection were published between 1450, when the printing press was developed by German printer Johannes Gutenberg, and 1501.

Bibliotheca: Bookcase

Storing 17 million items is a massive task. The following pages explore many types of book shelves and book-storage systems.



Many of the older, more fragile, and/or more expensive items that are in public-access areas are stored in climate-controlled glass cases. Moisture and extreme temperatures are both destructive to books.

Opposite: A copy of the Bay Psalm Book, the first book printed in the United States, in glass case. A copy sold by auction at Sotheby's in 2013 for a record-setting \$14 million. Only 11 copies are known to exist.

Left: Books published between 1450 and 1501 are displayed in glass cases in Houghton Library.



in•her•ent vice

/in'hi(ə)rənt vīs/

noun

The tendency of material to deteriorate due to the essential instability of the components or interaction among components.

Ex. Highly acidic paper and nitrate film suffer inherent vice because they are chemically unstable.



Early paper was made by mashing wood pulp against fine screens. The final product resembled cloth more than what we today consider paper, and, unlike modern paper, was not treated with acid or other chemicals. Thus, this book created in 1480 is in better condition than many twenty-year-old paperbacks made of modern paper.



These traditional printing blocks are on display in glass cases in Houghton Library.



The Mid-East Library on the sixth floor of Widener Library. Left, books in Arabic behind a wire barrier. The Mid-East library is one of two 'caged' areas in the Widener Stacks. The other is the History of Science collection. The cages exist to regulate access to the collections.



Wire barriers. In the Donald & Mary Hyde Collection of Dr. Samuel Johnson in Houghton Library, 4000 volumes are protected by wire barriers, but open to the climate controlled air of the Houghton Library. Rachel Howarth, Co-Acting Librarian of Houghton Library, explains that this storage system is preferable to glass cases, as it avoids the risk of mold.

Compact Shelving, here found in Cabot Science Library. Compact shelving is a manual or electronic system of compressing multiple bookcases. The cases ride on moveable carriages over floor-installed rails. This reduces the amount of space necessary to store books by approximately one-half, as there is no need for access space between shelves. Instead, when a patron wants to access a book, they press a button that causes the shelves to move, which creates an accessible aisle at the row requested.





Please do not
exceed the limit



Metal shelves in Widener Library and Lamont Library. The ten floors of stacks compose the structural support of the entire Widener Library building. Each of the ten levels of stacks shelving is composed of iron shelves and is climate controlled. The many oversize books (folios and portfolios) are stored in larger bookshelves at the end of each section.





Traditional bookshelves made of hardwood in the Robbins Philosophy Library . Preservation specialists discourage the use of wooden shelves because the acids that naturally occur in wood can leak into paper, causing deterioration.



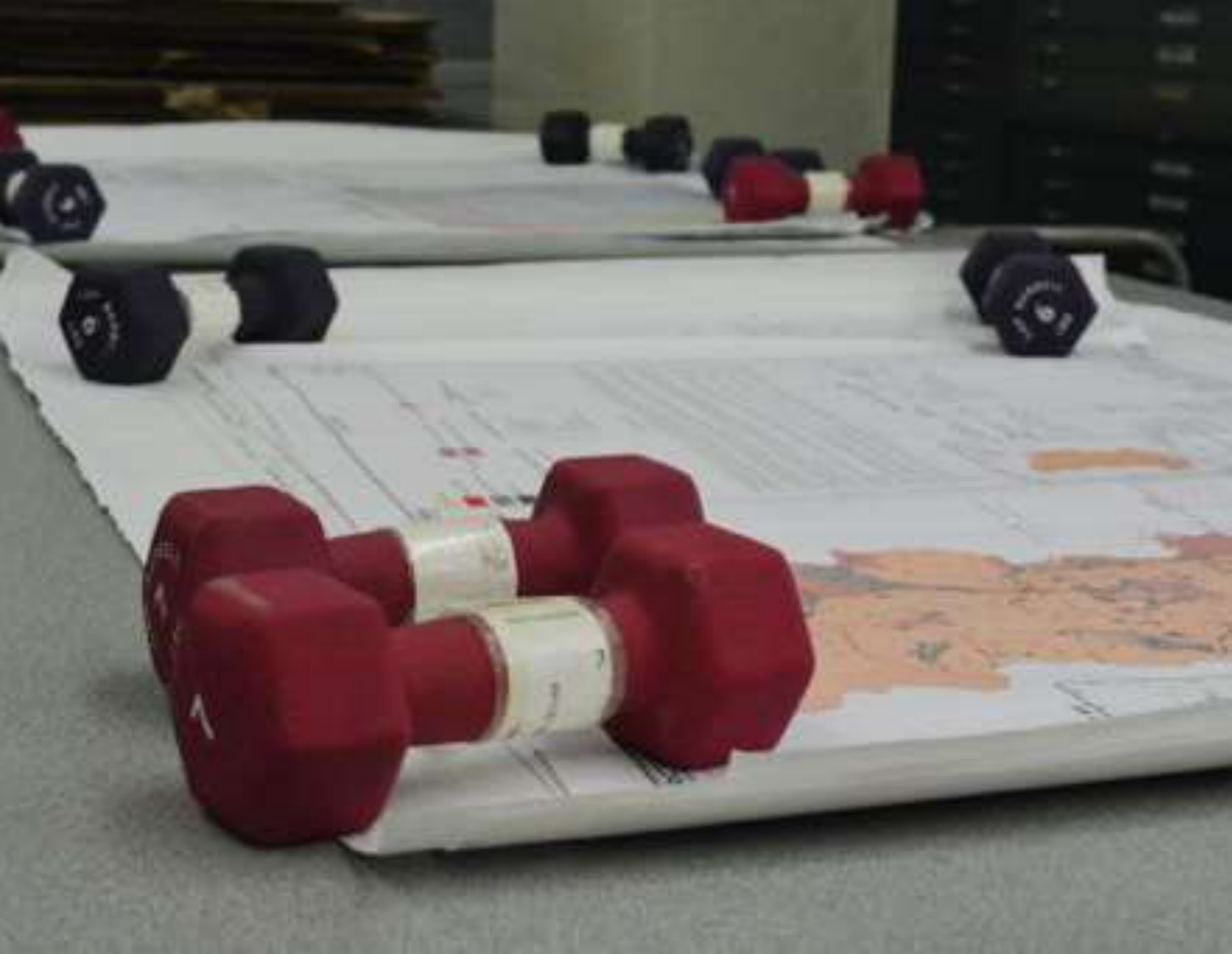




The most delicate (as well as the most valuable) items in the Harvard collections are stored in black acid-free boxes and placed on shelves horizontally, rather than vertically, to avoid possible damage to the spine. Photography is strictly prohibited in the stacks where they are stored. This image is of material brought up to the Houghton Reading Room for patron use.



Most Houghton books are placed on foam blocks when read to prevent the spine from cracking.



Maps and other geographic documents are stored in the basement of Cabot Science Library. Left, a large topographical map is held down by dumbbells. Right, geological documents are stored in envelopes.







Top left, tectonic maps rolled up and stored in metal cabinets in the basement of Cabot Science Library. Lower left, microfilm storage cabinets relocated from Tozzer Anthropology Library to Cabot Science Library during renovation. Above, the drawer front of the map cabinet dangles at an angle.



While the Harvard College Libraries and the University Libraries work hard to carefully store and preserve their items, not all libraries are successful. Some small departmental libraries, like the Robbins Library of Philosophy (top left) use the floor as a bookshelf. Books are stacked atop a window ledge at Robbins Library of Philosophy (right).



Categorization and Cataloguing

Each library has its own system of storage and categorization. Items are stored on shelves or in boxes (or sometimes on the floor). Categorization is the separate but related process of deciding where an item should go, and in what order.

Where to find a book?

Signs throughout Widener explain the two primary cataloguing systems used in the library. Patrons who can't decide between the Old Widener and Library of Congress systems are encouraged to seek a librarian's assistance.

Right, a guide to Lamont Library book locations by call number.

Book Locations



Call Number Location Chart

A - D	Third Floor
E - G	Second Floor
H	Level B
J - L	Second Floor
M	Level A
N - PM	Second Floor
PN - PS	First Floor
PT - PZ	Level A
Q - Z	Level B
Documents - US, Foreign, International (e.g. US Doc, Jpn Doc, UNO)	Level B and D
Farnsworth Room	Third Floor
Microforms (e.g. Film A, Microfilm SC)	Level B and D
Media	Level A
New Book Shelf	First Floor
Periodicals (bound)	Level A
Periodicals (current)	First Floor
Poetry Room	Third Floor
Ref. Room	Level B
Reserves	First Floor
Sound & Video Recordings	Level A

HOLLIS

Most Harvard items can be found on HOLLIS, the online catalogue named after Thomas Hollis, an Englishman who helped Harvard redevelop its library collection after the fire of 1764. Thomas Hollis created Harvard's first endowed book fund. Today's HOLLIS is a bacronym for Harvard Online Library Information System.

Before electronic categorization, the catalogue of each library was stored in Library Card Catalogs, where each item was listed on a card and sorted in alphabetical order. Clockwise from top left, a functional card catalogue in the Emily Dickinson Room of Houghton Library; a defunct card catalogue in the Robbins Philosophy Library; and a functional card catalogue of early American newspapers and magazines in the Houghton Reading Room.



The Chicago
Manual of Style



~~PARADOXICAL~~
← FREEWILL
AND DETERMINISM

LEVERETT'S
LATIN
LEXICON



In some small libraries, books are in the process of being catalogued or are stored in eccentric patterns.



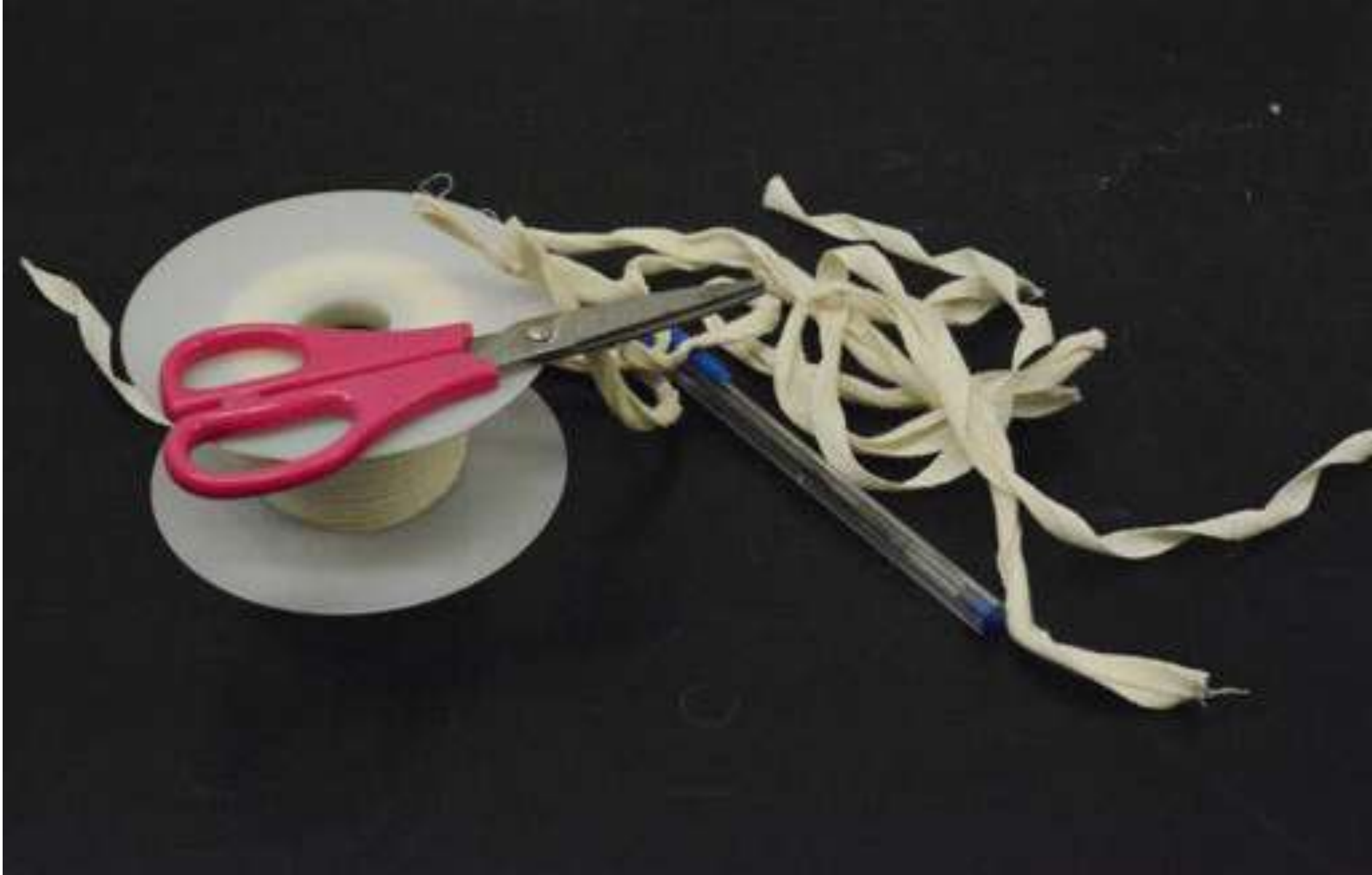
Conservation

When stored without proper care, books rapidly deteriorate. The Harvard University libraries share a Conservation Services department that cares for all university books. They are divided into three primary units based on specialty. The Weissman Preservation Center provides treatment/repair, binding, consultation, and preservation review for special collections. Collections Care treats general and circulating collections, and Media Preservation provides support for audiovisual collections. The library provides day-to-day support as well as emergency assistance. The Library Collections Emergency Team (LCET) provides 24-hour support for library emergencies beyond the capacity of local library staff.

Did a patron return a box of books left in storage over the summer that is now molding? Did they walk over in the rain without a plastic bag, returning a half-dozen soaking books? Spilled coffee on a shelf?

Someone will call the LCET.

Included in their wide range of support services is access to library-owned freeze-drying equipment to halt damage.



Conservation supplies in the Cabot Science Library. Clockwise from top left; a roll of flat cotton tape used to tie loose materials together or temporarily stabilize bindings while awaiting repair; a pen; scissors for cutting cotton tape.



LOWER LEVEL



Math, Sci, Eng, Maps,
Public Maps, Geological
Publications

Left; Lockers are available in the basement of Cabot Science Library to store personal belongings. Right, personal belongings are strictly banned from Houghton Library. Patrons must leave their bags and coats in lockers and may only bring a pencil, notebook, and/or laptop.





The rare books case in Robbins Philosophy Library. Some of the library's gems include a 1644 edition of Descartes' *Opera Philosophica*, a 1887 edition of Lewis Carroll's *The Game of Logic*, and a signed first edition of John Rawls' *A Theory of Justice*.

At one point, this case was labeled with a sign reading "Erotica," in order to discourage browsing of the materials on its shelves. Now, the case is locked instead.

Books by Reginald C. Robbins (A.B. 1892), the founder of the library. His donations and oversight of the library were based off the principle that “the philosophy student as much needs and deserves his working library as the chemist does his laboratory”. Between 1903 and 1920, Robbins published over 152 songs, a massive *Outline of a General Aesthetic*, and nine volumes of poems, some of which are seen here in the Robbins Philosophy Library rare books case. The signs of decay, however, are indication that conservation treatment is earnestly needed.



Other Library Uses

The official mission of the Harvard University Library System is that:

The Harvard Library advances scholarship and teaching by committing itself to the creation, application, preservation and dissemination of knowledge.

The most traditional method in which libraries deal with knowledge is the storage and loaning of books and other materials. However, the library also serves a wide array of other functions. The following pages explore the library as an architectural space, a memorial, an artistic space, a social space, and a place for study and research.

Right, Lamont Cafe, a popular undergraduate social space on campus. Students cluster in armchairs and around tables to work and study over cups of coffee and fresh pastries.





The central staircase of
Houghton Library.

The Stacks Reading Room, one of four major reading rooms in Widener. It was built in 2004 by installing a glass roof over former light corridors, a creative solution to Eleanor Elkin's mandate to not alter the 'footprint' or exterior of the building during any renovations.



Left; the central staircase of Houghton Library casts shadows against the wall.

Right; the 'staircase to nowhere' is an architectural oddity of Widener Library, leading from the sixth floor into the doorless ceiling.



L A M O N T



Widener Library is the commonly used name for what is officially known as the Harry Elkins Widener Memorial Library. Like many of the other Harvard libraries, it was built and/or named to commemorate an alumnus/-ae. Harry Elkins Widener (A.B. 1907) famously drowned during the *Titanic* disaster. Campus legend holds that Widener had secured a place on a lifeboat as a wealthy passenger in first class, but perished because he returned to his cabin to retrieve a rare book that he had secured in England.

Left, the Lamont Library façade, named after donor Thomas W. Lamont (A.B. 1892).



Left, a tree in Cabot Science library provides a pleasant break for patrons climbing the stairs to the second floor.

Right, a portrait of Dr. Samuel Johnson outside the Donald & Mary Hyde Collection of Dr. Johnson and Early Modern Books and Manuscripts in Houghton Library.





A student studies on the second floor of Cabot Science Library. Armchairs are interspersed with tables and carrels surrounded by bookshelves. Cabot is a popular study area for students with classes in the Science Center.

Students study and do research in the Government Documents/ Microforms Collections room in Lamont Library. The unique collection of government documents is open to the public as part of a public repository.





Left; one of many study spaces surrounded by bookshelves in Lamont library.

Right; a line of study carrels also in Lamont. These carrels are first-come-first-serve, while carrels in Widener can be reserved to store personal belongings and books for up to a year.



- Dean Equines / Phys Eq Sheets

- 1984

- 1985

- 1986

- No letter 3/4

Left; students write on study carrels on the second floor of Cabot Science Library. Doodles and scribbles often include academic thoughts, to-do lists, laments, and messages of support.

Right; a professor's private study in Widener Library. The doors are intentionally not marked with the professor's name to ensure that they have a space where they can work entirely undisturbed.



A reference desk in the
Government Documents/
Microforms Collection at
Lamont Library.

RESEARCH SERVICES



Guides

A map of the many Harvard libraries is displayed atop several books in Robbins Philosophy Library. Each library makes an effort to provide ample guidance and access to librarians to ensure that patrons can find what they need.



This project was created by Allison Gofman '14 as a final project for United States in the World 30: Tangible Things: Harvard Collections in World History in December 2013, taught by Laurel Thatcher Ulrich (University Professor; History) and Sarah Anne Carter (History).

It was inspired by the "staircase to nowhere" and other architectural eccentricities pointed out during an orientation tour for new workers at Widener Library, where the artist works.

All photos were taken with a Nikon D7100 Digital SLR.