

Internship ING4

Report

Harvard University

Thibaut Vercueil

summer 2015

Abstract

This is the abstract

Contents

1	Introduction	3
I	Harvard University	4
2	History	4
2.1	Harvard University	4
2.2	Harvard School of Engineering and Applied Sciences	4
2.3	Mazur group	5
3	Organization	6
3.1	Main organization of the university	6
3.2	Main organization of Harvard School of Engineering and Applied Sciences	7
II	The internship	8
4	Mission and goals	8
4.1	Specifications	8
4.2	Difficulties encountered	8
5	Work organization	9
5.1	Tools	9
6	Skills used	9
7	Results	9

Acknowledgement

1 Introduction

Part I

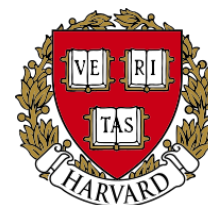
Harvard University

2 History

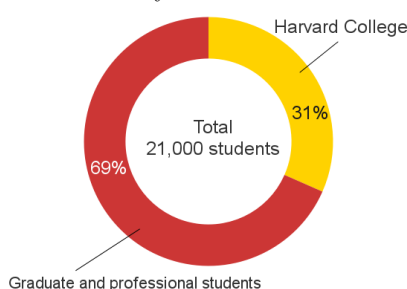
2.1 Harvard University

Harvard university is the most ancient university of the United States. It's located in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in Boston's suburb. It has been created in 1636 by vote of the Court of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The school was named *Harvard College* in 1639, in homage to John Harvard, who had left the school *livre* 779 and his library of some 400 books. John Harvard was the first donor to the school.

During the following decades, Harvard University never ceased to grow up and it's now the richest University in the world with \$36.4 billion of endowment.



Harvard seal



Harvard university includes several universities, here is a list of the most important ones:

- Faculty of Arts and Sciences composed by
 - Harvard College
 - Continuing Education
 - Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
 - Harvard John A. Paulson School of Engineering and Applied Sciences
- Business School
- Kennedy School of Government
- Law School
- Medical School
- Radcliffe Institute
- School of Education
- Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

2.2 Harvard School of Engineering and Applied Sciences

As you saw earlier “being in Harvard” without precising which university doesn’t mean much, and so, during this internship, I was affiliated to the Harvard School of Engineering and Applied Sciences, later called SEAS — Little story: the school name changed during my journey, as Mr John A. Paulson did a donation of \$ 400.000.000 to SEAS, so the school was renamed after him.

The progenitor of the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences was called *Lawrence Scientific School* and was founded in 1847. It was named for Abbott Lawrence, who donated \$50,000 (an unprecedented sum at the time) to create the institution. It was detached from Harvard College, which means it was independent financially. At this time, the School saw a diverse group of thinkers and professionals — astronomers, architects, naturalists, engineers, mathematicians, and even philosophers — pass through its doors.

At the end of the 19th century, the school suffered the “Competition” from the newly born Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) — Now one of the greatest engineering schools in the world. The Harvard president of the time tried to merge the Harvard Scientific School with the MIT, vainly.

In 1901, despite the help of Gordon McKay, the school merged with Harvard College and lost his independence.

Later, the Harvard Lawrence Scientific School became *The Division of Applied Science* and in 2007, it was renamed as the *Harvard School of Engineering and Applied Science*.

It's a new start for the the School, Venkatesh Narayanamurti, Dean of Harvard School of Engineering and Applied Sciences at the time declared:

"Our transition from a Division to a School is not a departure from history—but in some sense, we are coming full circle. The Lawrence School, our progenitor, will be reborn in a new form appropriate for the 21st century."

Thus, strictly speaking, SEAS is a young school, only 8 years old, and in full growth. Thanks to the 4 million dollars given by John Paulson, the school will expand and build laboratories in Allston, the city bordering Cambridge, on the other side of the river.

In order to realise the importance of Harvard engineering school in the world of sciences, here are a few examples of inventions made here:

- in 1919, the **crystal oscillator** came out of the Harvard Engineering School's Croft Laboratory, invented by George Washington Pierce
- in 1938, the **largest cyclotron of the world** (at the time) was constructed at the Graduate School of Engineering's Gordon McKay Engineering Laboratory.
- in 1977, Bill gates would have graduated from Harvard but he left the university to found **Microsoft**, one of the biggest company in the world.
- in 2004, **Facebook** was born in a dorm room of Harvard housing, created by Mark Zuckerberg, it's now the biggest social network ever created

2.3 Mazur group

Harvard School of Engineering and Applied Sciences is composed by several research groups. This summer, I worked with the group of professor Eric Mazur, Balkanski Professor of Physics and Applied Physics and Area Dean for Applied Physics.

Professor Mazur founded the group in 1991 to study the dynamics of molecules, chemical reactions, and condensed matter on very short timescales — down to femtoseconds (10^{-15} second). Physics in this ultrafast regime is studied using light, specifically very short laser pulses. So the mazur group works with femtoseconds lasers.

In addition to the work in optical physics, The Mazur Group is very active in research about education. In 1990, Eric Mazur began developing Peer Instruction, a method for teaching large lecture classes interactively. He is the author of *Peer Instruction: A User's Manual* (Prentice Hall, 1997), a book that explains how to teach large lecture classes interactively.

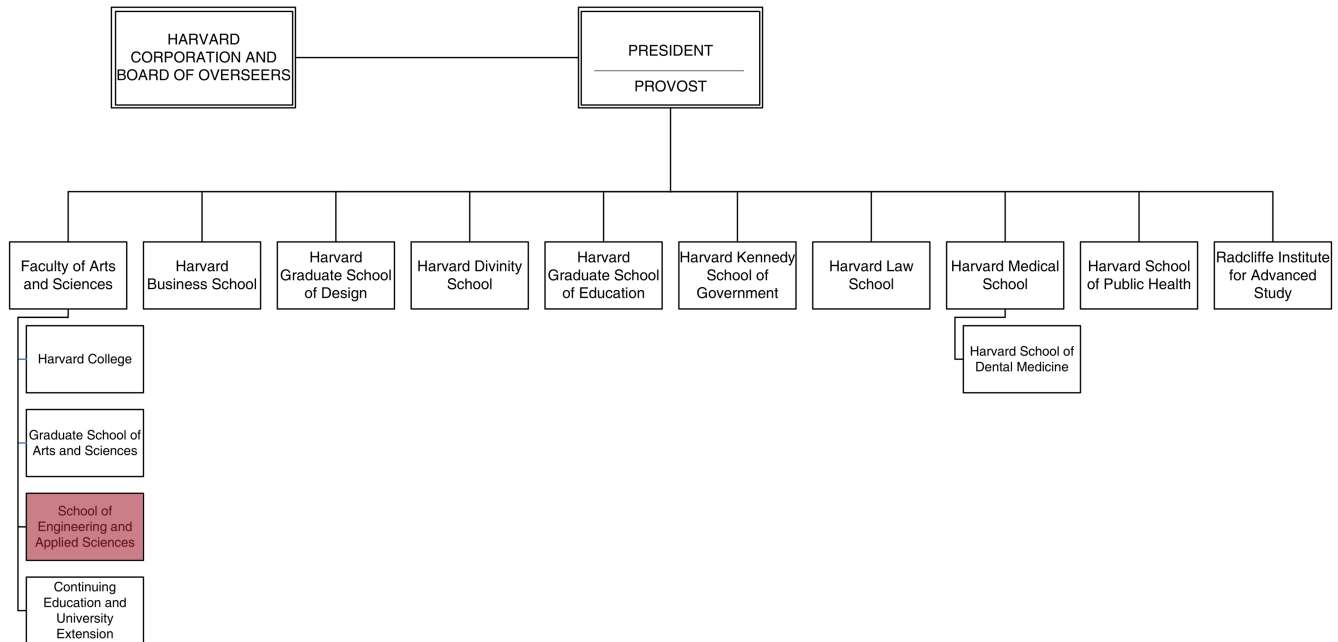
3 Organization

3.1 Main organization of the university

Harvard University is huge. It's composed by a dozen of universities and it's under the direction of the president Drew Gilpin Faust and the provost Alan M. Garber.

Harvard is known to be a decentralized organization. Each constituent faculties has a lot of independence. This mean each faculties set their own academic standards and manage their own budgets. Each facultie is directed by the faculty dean whose role is to manage the matters of the facutly

Here you can see a chart representing the several faculties composing Harvard University (The one in which I worked is highlighted):



However, despite this decentralized management, the roles of the president and the provost are really important.

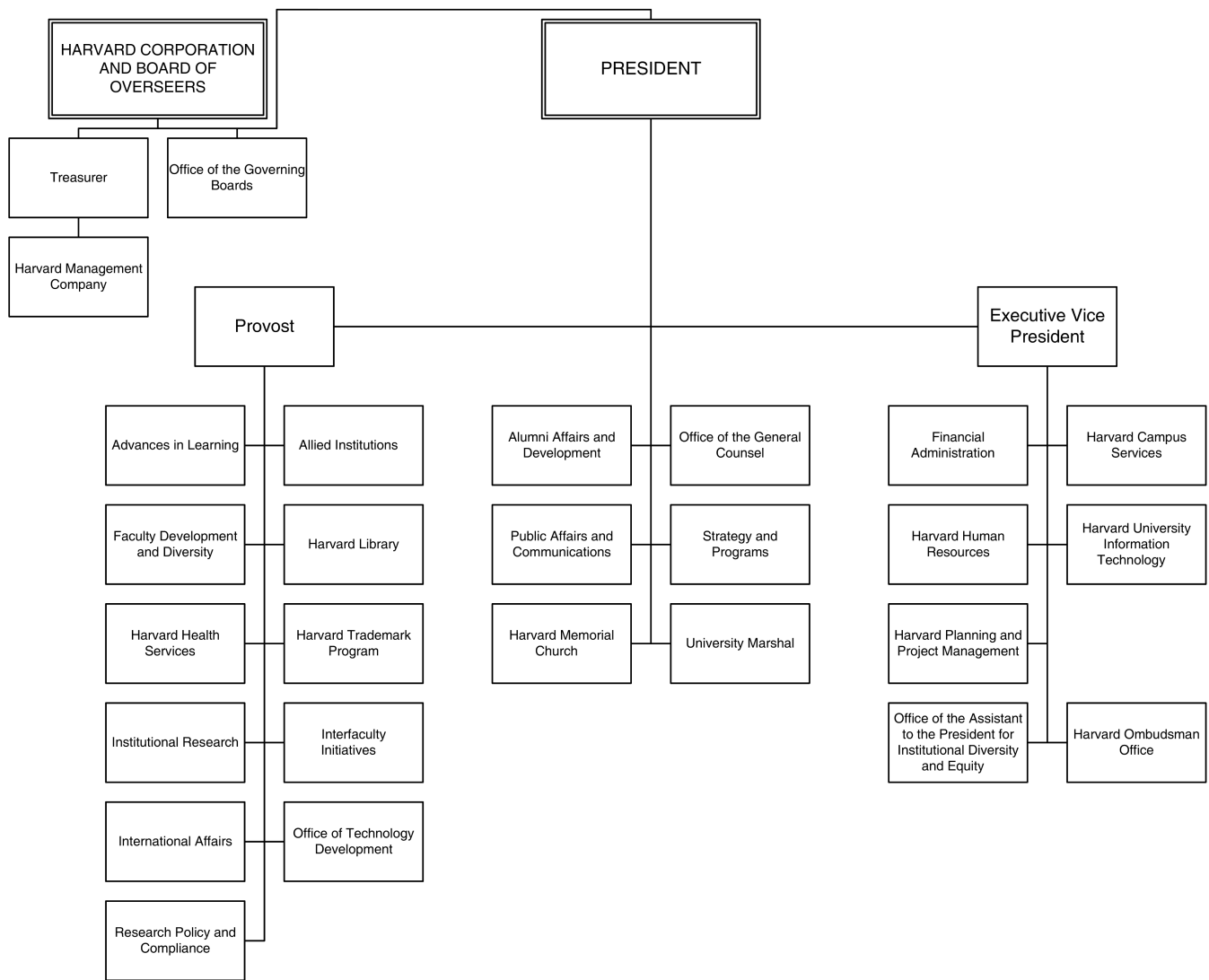
The president of Harvard university has two hats: Chief administrator of the university and the *ex officio* chairman of the Harvard Corporation. The president plays an important part in university-wide planning and strategy. She names a faculty's dean the university's provost, and she grants tenure to recommended professors. However, she is expected to make such decisions after extensive consultation with faculty members.

Moreover, as the leader of one of the most prominent universities in the world, Harvard presidents have influenced educational practices nationwide.

The provost of Harvard serves as chief academic officer. He works with the President to oversee academic policies and activities university-wide. The Office of the Provost works closely with the University's academic and administrative leaders to: foster interfaculty collaboration, improve Harvard's performance in building a diverse pipeline of scholars and in developing scholars at all stages of the academic career ladder, advance university-wide approaches to compliance and research policy, support University cultural and artistic entities and projects; oversee and coordinate the University's international activities; support faculty, students, and academic professionals in advancing innovations in teaching and learning; and oversee activities pertaining to intellectual property, technology transfer, research collaborations with industry, and trademark licensing¹.

The chart bellow represent the organization of the Harvard's central administration:

¹provost.harvard.edu



3.2 Main organization of Harvard School of Engineering and Applied Sciences

As I said earlier, each faculty composing Harvard university is very independent. As a consequence, School of Engineering and Applied Sciences has it's own intern administration and financial management.

At the head of SEAS, we have the Dean, Francis J. Doyle III His role is to manage new faculty recruitment and faculty relations, for example authorizing faculty searches, approving promotion reviews and special appointments. Furthermore, he leads strategic planning for SEAS (mostly the financial needs) and he coordinates fundraising. He organizes the alumni relations, which are very important in a university such as Harvard.

The faculty is divided into 8 "areas", at the head of which are the **area deans**. Each area dean is helped in his work by the **area director**

Part II

The internship

4 Mission and goals

In the internship offer, my mission was described as following:

We will update the Mazur group website. We need a student to port the php/mysql based Mazur group website to a new content management system and update photos and content. Skills needed: php/mysql experience required experience with some content management platform (WordPress, drupal, etc.) preferred. Bonus points for Adobe suite or CSS template coding.

I went on mazur.harvard.edu to see the website and I saw that it needed a wind of change. The design looks old and it doesn't fit to the screen, and the websites contains some dead links and not working search bars. I was not sure yet about How will I work and I waited to see my mentor Daryl to have more information about the mission.

So, in my first day of internship, I met Daryl, a post-graduate student who work with the Mazur group, and she told me that a designer will take care of the **front-end** part. I was pretty happy with this news, since I don't master web design and it's not the part of web developpement I'm intersted in. Consequently, my job was to develop the **back-end** part of the website, i.e the PHP/SQL code which drives the core of the content management website. Later, about a week after I started my internship, I met Eric Mazur, principal investigator of the group, he gave me his specifications.

4.1 Specifications

Basically the goal of my mission was to create a new website for the Mazur group, with pretty much the same features as the old one which are in a nutshell:

- For the visitor: Navigate through the contents (Publications, Talks, People, News about the group)
- Be able to search overall the website
- For the members of the group: Add, update and delete content.

4.2 Difficulties encountered

Languages and technologies

When I started to work on the website, my first task was to download the old website and database on my computer so I could work locally without "damaging" the current website.

I discovered that the database management system was **PostgreSQL**. I have always worked with **MySQL** as a management system and so I wasn't familiar at all with Postgre.

So, one of my first task during this internship was to install a PostgreSQL server on my computer which runs on ubuntu, simply by executing

```
# sudo apt-get install postgresql
```

in the terminal.

Then, once I had installed the server locally, I needed to import the current database and learn how to use PostgreSQL. I used a lot the documentation on PostgreSQL official website² which is really complete.

For a little while, I navigated through the database using command line, but it wasn't practical at all. Thus, I looked for a graphical user interface administration tool for managing the database, an equivalent of phpMyAdmin but for PostgreSQL, which would help me to manage the database.

I chose to install *PgAdminIII*, a powerful tool that allows me to manage the database, see the tables, execute queries. . .

In conclusion, learning how to use PostgreSQL wasn't so hard but it took me about a whole week to be really used to it. The query syntax is SQL so it wasn't different from I learnt at school.

²www.postgresql.org

Database

Once I mastered PostgreSQL and database management, I started to look at the current database organization of the website. The first thing I noticed was that it was very disordered. The database contained 196 tables where about a hundred was empty. Moreover, the encoding of the data was ASCII, a very old encoding format which can represent only 128 characters.

Thus, the first thing I did with the database was to convert it into UTF-8 encoding, a modern character encoding system, compatible with ASCII and way more complete.

Thanks to that, special characters such as “é” or “ï” can now be used in the database.

After looking at all the tables in the database, I decided to create a new one, and import tables that I wanted in it, so that this database would be “cleaner”. In order to easily transfer tables from a database to the other, I wrote a shell script which automatize the process:

```
#!/bin/bash
#Transfers tables from old database to new one
pg_dump -h localhost -U mazur_www mazur_www_utf8 --table $1 > /tmp/$1.pgsql #Exporting
psql -h localhost -U mazur_www mazur_db < /tmp/$1.pgsql #Importing
rm /tmp/$1.pgsql #Cleaning
```

Independance

5 Work organization

5.1 Tools

6 Skills used

7 Results