



JOHN HARVARD'S

# JOURNAL

## Widener Library: Youthful at the Core

THE REJUVENATION of Widener Library progresses. The Phillips Reading Room opened for use in October, a major new something-to-see. It is one of two nearly identical reading rooms built within the perimeter of

Photograph by Jim Harrison

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the stacks in the former light courts on either side of the rotunda at the center of the building—grand spaces and a valuable enhancement to the building Mrs. Widener gave to Harvard nine decades ago.

Any library patron may use Phillips, and will appreciate the room's quiet and agreeable atmosphere, but it is specifically a "controlled" reading room, where books that are not housed in the open stacks and do not circulate—usually, valuable books—may be used under the hawk eye of a librarian. Phillips is intended to thwart thieves and mutilators of books, persons who occasionally in the past have enjoyed the seclusion of the stacks.

The room will also—and, again, to protect the collection—accommodate people

without Harvard identification cards who are granted library privileges, people who heretofore might have been permitted access to the stacks. Thus, an Egyptologist visiting from the University of Bergen will go to an assigned seat in Phillips, and material from the Widener stacks, or from the Harvard Depository, will be brought to that seat for use in the reading room. The reading matter can be held in or near the room for several days for the scholar's return visits. Library staff promise they will cheerfully bring all that is requested so that the Bergenser will not be wholly denied the opportunity for serendipitous discoveries that

browsing the stacks allows—and will have a place to sit while making them.

The room's name recognizes the generosity of Charles Phillips '70, M.B.A. '72, and his wife, Candace (Robertson) Phillips.

With heightened concern about secu-

**Left and previous page: Filling what was formerly the east light court is the Phillips Reading Room. The ceiling is mostly glass—some clear, most clouded or "obscure." "We put a video camera inside a model of the room," says project manager Jeffrey Cushman, "and a computer-generated program simulated the movement of shafts of sunlight across the walls with different combinations of clear and obscure glass and at different seasons. We didn't want direct sun to hit the tables." The controlled reading room offers safety for books, comfort for humans. Above: The naked stacks. Renovations include an upgrade of all building systems.**



COURTESY WIDENER LIBRARY

rity in general, the library speeded up planned installation of machines that read identification cards at the entrances to the building and to the stacks. Now one swipes one's Harvard ID card to gain admittance.

Phase 1 of the Widener rehabilitation, with a project cost of \$56 million, should be complete by the end of March. Its focus is on the stacks and the guts of the elderly building. Librarians are moving all the books in an elaborate minuet so that work on each of the 10 stack levels can go forward, and they are dusting the books in the process, no small job. A team is selecting 10 percent of the books for off-site storage to make room for future acquisitions. The stacks have better lighting, a new sprinkler system, and a network of new, orange, smoke-detector pipes. The lighting system enhances personal security because any motion in the stacks turns on the lights. For the first time the air is regulated, with a temperature of 68 degrees Fahrenheit and humidity ranging from a winter minimum of 30 percent to a summer maximum of 50 percent. The favored faculty members with study offices in Widener are now or will be similarly aerated. When the work is complete, HOLLIS terminals will be found on every floor and photocopiers on every other. All the study carrels will be refurbished, and each will have a data jack. The east side of the stacks is done; workers on the west are moving from the bottom up.

The second of the two new reading rooms, intended ultimately for the use of any patron wishing to leave the stacks and sit down with a book in comfort, will be used during Phase 2 of operations as temporary quarters for books and library staff members. These are days of discomobulation, but, notes project manager Jeffrey Cushman '69, Ds '77, "The books don't complain when you move them."



JIM HARRISON

## Addie's Plaque, George's Hair

When a construction crew demolished a wall on the east side of the level-2 stacks in Widener during Phase I of renovations, they came upon a tarnished bronze plaque mounted in a crevice inside the wall. An inscription read: "Here worked Addie Frances Rowe, 1860-1938, Friend and Aider of Scholars."

Research in the Harvard Archives revealed that Rowe worked at Harvard for 45 of her 78 years, helping to prepare the books of University professors and visiting scholars for publication. She had no official title or job description, so far as is known, and indeed she may not have been an employee of Harvard at all, being paid instead by publishers or authors. At first she worked in the history department, proofreading and checking references, and then moved over to the English department. In August of 1915 she became the first non-faculty person to be assigned a study carrel in the stacks of the newly finished Widener—carrel 209. There she sat for 23 years perfecting the works of others.

English professor Hyder E. Rollins and Rowe teamed on many projects, and she judged him "one of my dearest friends." He urged her to write the story of her life, which she did with great economy of words, and it was printed after her death by the Harvard University Press in an edition of 55 copies, which Rollins distributed largely to her friends and family. He contributed an introduction.

"She became progressively more odd-looking," he wrote. "Style and dress meant nothing to her, as they are popularly supposed to mean nothing to all scholars. The quaintness of her 'costumes,' though it often caused smiles in a neighborhood where (according to the libels of outlanders) women are noted for their lack of style, would have attracted little, if any, attention in the British Museum."

Rowe had another talent. She kept a signature array of pink and red pelargoniums in her study carrel, and they grew to heights unprecedented in Rollins's experience and astonishing to Rowe herself. They "were small for a number of

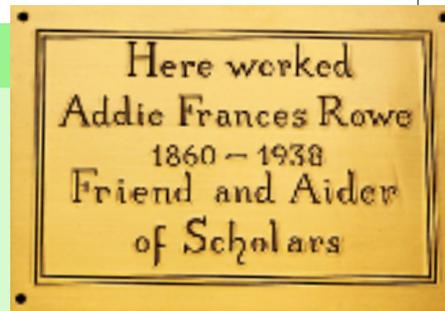
years," she wrote, "but finally those at the sides began to grow tall suddenly, reached the middle of the high windows, and kept on growing up.... I have cut off the top of the tallest plant (over six feet tall and in the same little pot it started in!) twice by a foot at least, else it would long ago have reached the top of the window and been blossoming in the next stall above."

After Rowe's death, the director of the library readily allowed the commemorative plaque to be put up in the stacks. Now released from its subsequent entombment in a wall, it is on display with other items of interest concerning the renovations underway.

Further in the lost-and-found department: a facilities-maintenance person from Widener, getting ready for construction in the area of the rotunda off the Harry Elkins Widener Room, came upon a vault in a closet. It contained an arresting array of items, and thinking that he had discovered buried treasure—forgotten curiosities, at least—librarians sent up a glad shout, noticed in the media. As things turned out, the vault was a storage spot for the Widener Room curators, who are actually Houghton Library staff members. They were well aware of the vault and its contents. The drama of the discovery dissipated. The library's conservation laboratory made a formal inventory of the vault's contents, did some preservation work on various pieces, and distributed them all to Houghton, the Harvard Archives, and other libraries. Law School librarians, for instance, were pleased to get an iron seal once used by Isaac Royall, who funded the University's first chair in the law by a gift of land in 1779. The vault also contained, in part, commemorative medals, postcards, sabers, uniforms, silver spoons and forks, a bronze of Abraham Lincoln, a plaster bust of Mussolini, and a lock of George Washington's hair. "In collectors' circles," says Beth Brainard, the library's director of communications, "there are as many locks of George's hair floating around as there are pieces of the Cross."

that needs to be done. As with the books, we will rearrange, consolidate, and make sense of the administrative and public spaces. The back-office functions will move down in the building. Busy, interactive services will be separated from the reading rooms. Things will get quieter as one goes up."

"This renewal includes not only the restoration of the original architectural features and finishes," says Susan Lee, associate librarian for planning and administration, "but also the creation of new spaces for programmatic use." Thus, reference services and the periodicals reading area, which have long encroached on the main Loker Reading Room on the



A plaque discovered in a wall during Widener renovations. Below: A neglected vault yielded up treasures, among them a seal used by Isaac Royall, who funded the University's first chair in the law, to emboss his family's arms on documents.



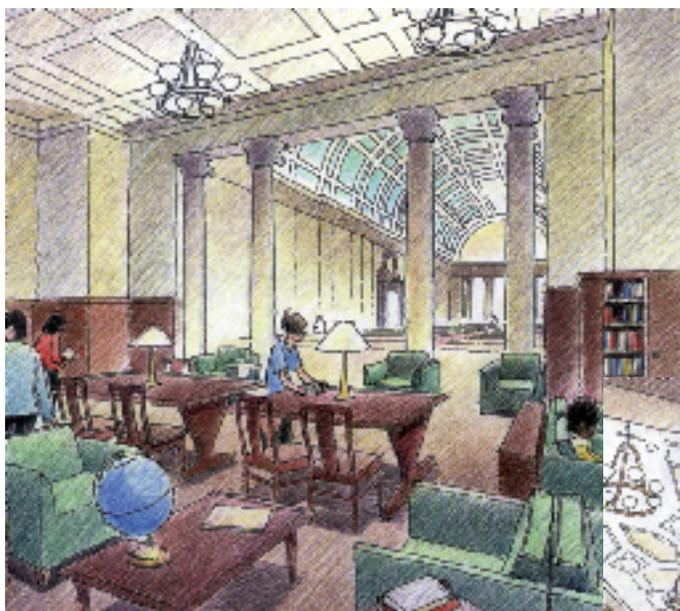
Phase 2, with a project cost of \$32 million, began last June and will run into 2004. "There's a lot of marble in this building," acknowledges Cushman, "and it won't be restored to perfection. But by 2004 we will have done just about all else

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second floor, will be ousted from that impressive chamber. A new reference and research-services room will be provided adjacent to the Loker Room. In it, patrons will be able to confer with librarians without disturbing readers or the somnolent, as now happens.

A new periodicals room will be created on the first floor—the level on which visitors enter, at the top of the sweep of steps in front—and that floor will become a hub connecting patrons with the various parts of the library. Near the periodicals room will be a new space in which to read microtext files of old newspapers. Offices for administrators and for those in charge of collection development, who have numerous contacts with faculty members and non-Harvard people, will also be on this floor, according to Lynda Leahy, associate librarian for research and instruction. So will an expanded privileges office to welcome the large number of visiting Egyptologists and others, who sometimes form long lines in today's facility. The



**Above:** In the second phase of the Widener renovation, reference services and the periodicals reading area will move, restoring the main reading room to its former dimensions. **Right, top:** The new periodicals room. **Right, bottom:** The reference room to be.



main entrance to the stacks and to the new reading rooms one floor above will be there, too.

“When this project is complete,” says Lee, “Widener Library will be reestablished as a modern facility that can comfortably accommodate both books and users for decades to come.”

## Second in Command

IN HIS INSTALLATION ADDRESS on October 12 and in a subsequent talk to alumni 15 days later, President Lawrence H. Summers emphasized that efforts to bring the University community together intellectually and otherwise, and scientific research and education, would be two themes of his administration. Matching action to agenda, on October 29 he announced the appointment of Steven E. Hyman, M.D. '80, as provost, Harvard's second-ranking academic and executive officer. Hyman was scheduled to begin work on December 10, shortly after this issue went to press.

Hyman's career is the archetype of scientific curiosity and boundary-crossing. A 1974 Yale graduate in philosophy and the humanities, he then journeyed to the Uni-

versity of Cambridge as a Mellon Fellow in the philosophy of science, earning B.A. and M.A. degrees. After earning his M.D., he became an intern in medicine at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH), a resident in psychiatry at McLean Hospital, and a postdoctoral fellow in molecular biology. At Harvard Medical School (HMS) he rose to become professor of psychiatry, directing the school's division on addictions from 1992 to 1995 as well as psychiatry research at MGH from 1992 to 1996. Ranging widely across Harvard, too, he was also the first faculty director of the interdisciplinary mind/brain/behavior program (see “Mind, Brain, and Behavior,” November-December 1994, page 36).

In 1996, Hyman was appointed director of the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), where he has overseen a scientific staff of 1,000, some 300 administra-

tors, and an annual budget of \$1.2 billion. Among his priorities there, he cited “research that links information about basic biological and genetic processes to research on behavior,” with the goal of moving information “as quickly as possible from the laboratory to new clinical uses and to strategies for preventing mental disorders.” He has also emphasized “enormously expanded research on how to improve the effectiveness of current treatments for several major mental disorders” in clinical settings, including bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, Alzheimer's disease, and depression. An NIMH colleague said, “Steve did great things here for those with mental disorders by blending scientific opportunity with public-health needs.”

As a public spokesman on mental health, Hyman drew on all the tools in his pedagogical portfolio. In 1997 testimony